

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES

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*The*  
EIGHT BEATITUDES

*by*

THE REVEREND CLEMENT HENRY CROCK, 1890-

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# Introduction

**T**HE Eight Beatitudes are a digest of human wisdom and a declaration of Christian ideals. In them men of thought have found courage and solace, and men of action have found inspiration and love. They are for all men of all ages. Timeless, they apply now no less truly than when our Lord first addressed them to the multitudes. However much any of us are disturbed by the present state of the world, so long as men are mindful of and reflect upon the Beatitudes, our world will not be entirely without hope.

The purpose of this book is to renew in some small way such hope in your hearts. It is to remind you that the well of wisdom and love that our Lord opened to us so long ago is still fresh with living waters, that generations have slaked their thirst at this well, and that it flows now no less freely for you than it did for them.

A book upon the Beatitudes, then, is always timely. Many such books have been written, and each succeeding one will owe something of itself to its predecessors. Thus it is a pleasure to acknowledge here my own debt to, among others, the work of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen (*The Cross and the Beatitudes*, P. J. Kenedy, N. Y., 1937), of

F. X. Lasance (*The Beatitudes*, Benziger Bros., N. Y., 1940), and of Hugh F. Blunt (*The New Song*, Salvatorian Press, St. Nazianz, Wisconsin). It may hardly be necessary to add that Butler's *Lives of the Saints* was of invaluable assistance in preparing these reflections, but particular attention must be called to the monumental four-volume work of Kenelm H. Digby, *Mores Catholici or Ages of Faith* (P. O'Shea, N. Y., 1888), to which the present volume is chiefly indebted.

If the reader, returning to these older books on the completion of this, finds his comprehension of the Beatitudes deepened and his love of the ideal there set forth renewed, the purpose of this book—and of all books so conceived—will be more than adequately fulfilled.

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THE EIGHT BEATITUDES



## The Setting:

### Moral and Physical

**T**HERE has never been an age or period in the history of the human race in which the principles of the Eight Beatitudes were not timely or practical. In a major address at Fordham University, May 12, 1946, President Truman declared: "I doubt whether there is in this troubled world today, when nations are divided by jealousy and suspicion, a single problem that could not be solved if approached in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount." He referred especially to the Eight Beatitudes, which constitute the introduction to our Lord's sermon on that day in which He summarized the essence of His doctrine based upon peace. And this peace, says Clare Boothe Luce, "is the trustful triangle formed by love between each man, his neighbor, and God. Peace! No man-made plot or plan, no diplomatic maneuvers can advance it. No international organizations or treaties can guarantee it. No balance of power, schemes, no armies can enforce it unless—unless God is the base of the triangle formed by Him, with each of us on one side and our neighbor on the other."

Christ's Sermon on the Mount as recorded in chapters five through seven of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and of which the Eight Beatitudes are a mere summation, is of vital importance in the life of everyone. It is fully understood only by those who have thoroughly studied its contents. Dr. James T. Fisher, one of the country's foremost psychiatrists, writes in *The Case Book of a Psychiatrist* as follows: "If you were to take the sum total of all the authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene, if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbiage, if you were to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount."

Therefore, from the very start it is well that we get the proper setting of time, place, and circumstance which formed the back-drop, as it were, against which our divine Savior gave us the full declaration of His future policy, the Magna Carta of the New Kingdom.

### *Pagan Rome Ruled Supreme*

When Jesus began His public career after thirty years in seclusion at Nazareth, the entire world was chafing under the heel of the Roman conqueror. Under the pagan rule of the Caesars religion had become a mere ceremonial thing, a juggling with signs and symbols. Everything was the state, and that meant a striving only for material things. Bread and the circus! Eat, drink, and be merry! These were the slogans of the day. Political virtue meant



everything. If you were a good and loyal citizen externally, you were religious enough.

Idolatry, or the worship of false gods, prevailed. Why then attempt to placate a thousand and one gods, borrowed from every superstition under the sun! It was rank nature-worship, success-worship at its worst that prevailed. Tyranny was king, not only over the bodies but over the souls of her subjects. Rome itself was essentially a nation of slaves whose conscience, too, had been sold into slavery. In the words of Strabo and Pliny, two of their historians, religion is a governmental device for keeping the passions of the lower order under restraint, and the immortality of the soul is a mere dream. Ah, the opiate of the people! Something we seem to have heard in our own day! It is the same cynical scepticism of a worldly-minded people as in the days of classical Rome when pagan scholars like Tacitus repudiated the idea of Providence, when Caesar denied the immortality of the soul, and Cicero laughed at the idea of rewards and punishments hereafter. With such sentiment prevailing, the moral condition of society always deteriorates. Tacitus summed it all up in a few words: "to corrupt and be corrupted." And Renan, the historian, says Rome under the Caesars "became a school of immorality and cruelty." Yes, Rome with its unrestrained self-indulgence, its cruelty and its pride, and Greece in its decadence and rot were paganism at its best when Christ appeared upon the world scene. —

### *Israel Little Better*

And writhing under the same Roman conqueror, Christ found even His own chosen people, and especially their leaders, tainted with the same corrupt pagan philosophy

and religious outlook. We hear our Lord a little later single out two groups in particular, the Scribes and the Pharisees, for most severe castigation, calling them hypocrites and whited sepulchers. And He had reason to do so.

The Scribes were the professional interpreters of the Law of Moses in the synagogues. After the Jews returned from Captivity, the Law again became the daily rule of life. But there were so many obscure regulations that certain official scholars were appointed to clarify and interpret these laws for the man in the street. These were called the Scribes or Writers, chosen from the priests or Levites. In the beginning they were pious and zealous men. But soon jealousy and bitter rivalry arose between the priests and laymen amongst these Scribes. Many became overbearing, exclusive, despising the people who had really elevated them. In their conceit they began to neglect the essential spiritual aspect of the Law and to quibble about minor details until at the time of Christ the Law had been reduced to a mathematical formula.

The Pharisees, too, had fared no better. In the beginning they were true men of God, with an honorable history over the years. They were also called Separatists, because their aim originally was to preserve the purity of Judaism from the taint of pagan doctrine and immorality which were always threatening. They could well claim to be called the Defenders of the Faith. Naturally, they despised the pagans whom they regarded as enemies to all that was good and holy. With such zeal for religion and true patriotism, it was no surprise that the people revered them and regarded them as their true leaders. But again, in time, something went wrong at the heart of their system. Again, it was pride, personal and national, which caused their downfall. In their conceit they became

fanatical and domineering, despising the people that had made them. This perverted their ideas of a spiritual kingdom and made them regard only what was considered conducive to material prosperity. They extolled ultra-nationalism, ultra-patriotism, a curse then as always, and they ended in the mere external observances of the Law, quite like the necromancy of the religions of the despised pagans.

Jesus describes them as follows: They were proud, looking always for honors, perverting the Scriptures, setting aside the great spiritual commands of the Law and making all religion consist of petty ritualistic observance, loading down the people with intolerable burdens, multiplying traditions which they claimed were just as important as the Law merely because they said so, piling restriction upon restriction until religion became a horrible nightmare. In short, Jesus called them hypocrites.

In addition to the Scribes and Pharisees there were the Sadducees, who were chiefly of the priestly class. These considered themselves broad-minded, liberal, and were known to consort with the pagans. They were rank materialists who denied the immortality of the soul; they were outward observers of the Law, but without sincerity; and they cared little for the welfare of the people. Such were the religious leaders at the time of Christ, divided among themselves, all intriguers, materialists, grasping, plotting, hating, perfectly satisfied with themselves, sure of their position, knowing that the people held their office in high regard. And to all these Jesus referred when He called them whited sepulchers.



*The Savior Appears*

Here then, we have a bird's eye view of the world as Jesus came forth from His seclusion in Nazareth and entered upon His public life. The second year of His public ministry was well along before He gave us His Sermon on the Mount. Momentous events had already taken place. He had been baptized by John, and immediately after He had spent forty days in the desert where He was tempted by Satan. He had already chosen His first disciples: Andrew, John, Simon, Philip and Nathanael, who accompanied Him to Cana. At Cana He had performed His first miracle, changing water into wine at the wedding. The same year we find Him at Capharnaum, and then at Jerusalem for the Passover, where He created consternation by cleansing the Temple of those who were profaning it. Later He returned to Galilee through Samaria and settled at Capharnaum where He established His headquarters.

But why Capharnaum? Because it was best situated for His mission. Since Christ already had incurred the hatred of the ruling classes at Jerusalem, Capharnaum became the logical headquarters from whence His deeds and miracles, His doctrine of His new Spiritual Kingdom, were to go forth and embrace the whole world. Capharnaum was on the great caravan route and consequently a cosmopolitan city where people from many lands met. It was an important trade center, and hence its population consisted of bankers, brokers, artisans, bargainers, storekeepers, tax-collectors, laborers, fishermen, soldiers, sailors, prostitutes, and every trade under the sun. Furthermore, as in every trading center such as this, a lot of poor, simple people also gathered; people from Galilee, Judea,

Tyre, Sidon, Perea, from everywhere. Among these down-trodden, good and simple folk from many lands, were men and women of deep religious feeling, still interested in spiritual things. And because of what they had already heard about the great Wonder Worker in their midst, these people followed events of the day closely, sensing that something startling, something of great importance was about to take place. They crowded around Jesus and watched His every word and move. In turn, Jesus saw that this was the propitious moment when He might proclaim to them and to the whole world His new Declaration of Independence, His new Magna Carta for the new Spiritual Kingdom He was about to establish here on earth. It is known as the Sermon on the Mount. It begins with a summary of the entire discourse, and this introduction is known as the Eight Beatitudes.

### *Mount of Beatitudes*

According to tradition, the mountain where the new proclamation was made is Karn Hattin (or Kurun Hattin), so called from the village at its base and the two horn-shaped cones at the top which crown its summit. Between these horns is a large plain or platform. Looking to the east below is the Lake of Galilee, or Lake Genezareth, with its placid gray-blue water and Capharnaum along its shore. To the west lie Nazareth, Cana, and Mount Thabor upon which the Transfiguration later took place. Even as I saw them, the flowers of multiple colors covered the green hills, the birds were singing, the sunshine glowing on hill and vale and sea. Such must nature have been on the day when Jesus spoke.

Christian orators and scholars have always delighted in



contrasting Moses upon cloud-capped Sinai with Jesus promulgating the New Law upon the Mount of Beatitudes. Father Fillion does so beautifully. "In the one case," he writes, "there was the arid desert, a forbidding gigantic rocky mountain, crowned with lightning flashes, an awesome region; in the other case there was the grass-covered plateau from which one looks down upon a region which in former times was reckoned among the most charming in the world. At Sinai God's word reverberated like awful thunder claps; here the divine word is full of mildness. There the people were commanded to keep aloof; here with cordial familiarity they approach the Lawgiver, who is the Savior of mankind."

The two cone-shaped horns surmounting the Mount of Beatitudes might also be considered significantly symbolical, the smaller cone representing the Old Law, and the larger the fulfillment of the Old in the New Law. Jesus declared that He came not to destroy but to fulfill; that is, to perfect the Law, and thus establish a new Kingdom. Much of the Old Law was figurative or symbolic, and so passed away when the figures and symbols were fulfilled and made articulate. The figures and symbols passed away, but what the Old Law contained of dogmatic or moral truths did not change; they were further developed and made perfect. For example, when Jesus speaks to people about the Decalogue forbidding actual murder, He forbids even anger, which may be the cause of murder. In other words, Jesus now stresses not only the outward observance, but the interior observance of the law as well. And above all, this New Law was no longer to be a law of fear, but one of love. And so touchingly, so lovingly did Jesus speak to the multitude gathered around Him that, at the close of His Sermon on the Mount, St. Mat-

thew tells us, "the crowds were astonished at his teaching; for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees."

### *A Final Suggestion*

Now, before continuing, I would like everyone to read the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. In that sermon, says St. Augustine, is contained all that pertains to the best morals and to the perfection of Christian life. The whole theme of it is the true Christian character, the laws of the Kingdom of God in opposition to the Kingdom of the World. It is the theme of the two standards. Here we find the conditions for true membership in Christ's Kingdom, real justice, real holiness of soul. Therein is our true life, for again in the words of St. Augustine, "Christianity is not a mere collection of doctrines but a life that must be lived to the full."

Let us, therefore, begin prayerfully and piously to study the Beatitudes well. They were given by Christ not only to the multitude that heard them in His Sermon on the Mount, but are intended for all generations to come. They are the invitation to fellowship with Christ, and we should wear them as a royal garment. They are sure guides to sanctity, and "sanctity is but heaven begun on earth." It is noteworthy that the Gospel which Holy Mother Church has designated for the Feast of All Saints (Nov. 1), our feast by anticipation, is made up of the Eight Beatitudes. From the saints we learn how others kept them in order that we, too, may muster the courage to make them our very own and become saints. For the Beatitudes are the "prescription of the Great Physician for

all our ills of soul and body." In the words of St. Ambrose, "If thou hast wounds to be healed, He is thy physician; if fever scorches thee, He is the fountain; wouldst thou punish evil-doing, He is justice; dost thou need help, He is strength; dost thou fear death, He is life; dost thou long for heaven, He is the way; dost thou flee from darkness, He is light; dost thou hunger, He is food." So, let Christ be "the way, the truth, and the life," as we begin now our study of the Beatitudes.

## Beatitudes in General

IN THE preceding chapter we gave you a condensed world picture of the trying times and conditions that prevailed at the coming of Christ when the whole world was enslaved by the pagan Rome of the Caesars. And now imagine how frightful it would be for us to wake up some morning and find that during the night Stalin's Iron Curtain had descended upon the entire free world engulfing us all in the darkness of Communism. This is exactly what our divine Savior intended to forestall when He gave us His message of peace from the Mount of Beatitudes.

Upon the spring-time mountain slope overlooking the placid Sea of Galilee—with Capharnaum, our Savior's second home, quietly nestling along its shore—Jesus began to speak. The disciples sat immediately before Him, with the multitude stretching out over the plateau, all anxiously weighing every word that fell from His lips. Doubtless, the Apostles were the first object of His concern. He had already chosen them as leaders in His new Kingdom. They were already familiar with much of His teaching, and their career was crystallizing. Perhaps they now also expected a crystallization of their Master's teaching, some



definite statement as to the constitution, the aims of that Kingdom, its requirements and their corresponding duties, an explanation of how He differed from the present teaching of the Old Law, what were His ideals, His plans, and how those ideals were to be attained, what kind of people were to be admitted to the new Kingdom, and what were its by-laws.

### *The Blue Print Set Forth*

The gist of all this is contained in the Sermon on the Mount. The eager cosmopolitan crowd that heard the new Gospel of love so admirably expounded that early spring morning were soon to scatter to all parts of the world and tell their home folks all about Jesus, the new Teacher who had spoken to them "as one having authority, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees." Then, St. Matthew tells us, "when He had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed Him." And in order to confirm them in their faith before they dispersed, Christ began immediately to work various miracles. He cured the leper along the way; as He entered Capharnaum the centurion approached Him in behalf of his sick servant, and Jesus praised him for his deep faith and declared, "I have not found so great a faith in Israel, go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee"; He entered the home of Peter's mother-in-law and cured her fever; and as evening approached, "they brought to Him many who were possessed, and He cast out the spirit with a word, and cured all who were sick; that there might be fulfilled what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, who said, 'He himself took up our infirmities, and bore the burden of our ills.'" Surely, this great crowd that had heard and



followed Jesus from the Mount could hurry home to distant lands and tell of the great new Teacher who had appeared, the Wonder-worker that He was. This would be a dramatic preparation for the day when the apostles would come to them in fulfillment of Christ's command to "go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature."

### *The New Message Revealed*

Yes, from the words spoken on the Mount and the miracles wrought on that day, was to go forth a new message that was to encircle the globe. From what they had seen and heard went forth that day, in the words of Papini, "the greatest proof of the right of men to exist in the infinite universe." And this new message was extended to all without distinction of race, color, or creed, slave or free; a message succinctly expressed and summarized in the appealing poetry of the Beatitudes. Yes, poetry indeed, for the Beatitudes are poetical even in translation, and more so in the original words of Jesus. They are a real poem in their rhythm and parallelism, but they are vastly more than mere poetry; they are an exhortation to enter upon a crusade for the conquest of our Holy Land, the true spiritual Messianic Kingdom, here and in heaven. And we have the assurance of Christ Himself that this is the reward of every one of the Beatitudes as they have come down to us from His Sermon on the Mount:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the meek,  
for they shall possess the earth.

Blessed are they who mourn,  
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice,  
for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,  
for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart,  
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

### *Meaning of the Word "Blessed"*

It is difficult for us to express the exact meaning of "beatitude" in our tongue. The word comes from the Latin, meaning "happiness." But then, again, the word "happiness" is differently interpreted, and many seek happiness where it cannot be found. That is why the Beatitudes, with their startling new message and doctrine, were praised by some and condemned by others from the day Christ gave them to us in His Sermon on the Mount until the present day.

### *Pagan Concept of Happiness*

It is worthy of note that whenever Christ spoke to the common people, as He did in His Sermon on the Mount, He always spoke to them in simple and direct terms that they could understand, but when He spoke to their leaders He frequently spoke in parables. In fact, down through the centuries history proves that the common people in every age and clime were always docile people, willing to

be governed and guided according to Christian principles revealed in the Gospels, summarized in the Sermon on the Mount, and epitomized in the Beatitudes. They always understood the true meaning of happiness as propounded by Jesus in the Beatitudes. On the other hand, even at the time of Christ, the leaders of Rome and of Israel—and, we might add, all the followers of these materialistic leaders ever since—have always had an entirely different concept of the word “happiness.”

We have already indicated the pagan concept of human nature, the dignity of man, his rights and duties. To them the state was everything. Material things, wealth, sensual pleasures, and power summed up their idea of happiness. And the rulers of Israel, chafing under the cruel heel of a Caesar, with no king, no country, no glory, and taxed to the hilt by a pagan conqueror, had but one ambition, and that was to be free from the oppressor; such for them would be true happiness. They still entertained vague ideas about poverty, suffering, and slavery as disgraceful and as punishments for evil-doing. On the other hand, material prosperity, wealth, pleasure, and power meant God's benediction and the height of happiness. This perverted their idea of the promised Messias. Forgetting the spiritual aspect, they thought of a savior who would be a superman, a general who would restore Israel to its pristine glory, one who would set up a world-wide empire and install themselves as rulers of the world.

### *Christ's New Concept of Happiness*

To correct this erroneous concept of true and lasting happiness, Christ clearly indicated from the beginning



that His Kingdom is not of this world. His Kingdom was to deal with the soul of man, his ideas and ideals, which went beyond mere bodily and temporal needs and which concerned the very spirit of man and his eternal happiness. And if we but set our sight upon the eternal, temporal happiness will automatically follow. Christ even pointed out how supreme happiness is assured if we but follow step by step the method outlined in His Beatitudes.

First of all, to each Beatitude is attached a twofold blessing: in this life, the virtue is blessed in itself through happiness here; in the next life, a special recompense of happiness is promised. The rewards given to each Beatitude correspond, by a sort of contrast, to the virtues to which they are respectively assigned. But heavenly happiness is the ultimate reward of all the Beatitudes, only under different aspects. And while each succeeding Beatitude, as we shall eventually see, contains greater difficulties to observe, each succeeding reward also contains a greater portion of happiness and perfection.

Secondly, the Eight Beatitudes constitute a definite way of perfection. First, we have the purgative way, which eliminates all the dross from spiritual happiness. This is accomplished through the first three Beatitudes of poverty, humility, and mourning. Second, we have the illuminative way, which guides the soul through justice and mercy. Third, we have the unitive way, which unites us with God through purity and peace of soul. Fourth, comes the stability of perfection, which comes through persecution and guarantees eternal happiness.

*Modern Idea About the Beatitudes*

But as on the day when Christ spoke from the Mount, the world is still divided in its attitude towards the Beatitudes. Today we have many who still cling tenaciously to the materialistic idea of happiness, a happiness acquired through wealth, pleasures of the senses, and power. This material happiness is totally unlike that of our (spiritual kingdom) where the soul of man (finds happiness) in spiritual ideas and ideals, ideals like those of the young German boy, Hermann Joseph Flade, whom the Communists could not silence when, like our own Patrick Henry, he cried out in court—“Freedom means more to me than life.” But instead of ideas and ideals, too many still prefer “bread and the circus” as of old. They are willing to be humble, but without being looked down upon; patient, but without suffering; obedient, but without restraint; poor, but without wanting anything; penitent, but without sorrow.

On the other hand, the Christian world today accepts the Eight Beatitudes as the greatest source of true and lasting happiness. The Church has always stressed them in all her teachings, and especially in all her religious institutions. During the entire early history of the Church, known as the Ages of Faith, she would take the young and prepare them in her cloister schools from whence they would return to the world as future leaders. That is why the Ages of Faith were so glorious when people looked upon Christianity not merely as a collection of doctrines, but as a life that must be lived to the full. This was Christ's concept of happiness when He preached the Beatitudes to the world. And this also is the Christian concept of happiness today—the satisfaction of all the



needs of man's nature, the perfecting of his being, the attainment of his highest aspirations, the accomplishment of the purpose of his very existence, his supreme happiness. Therefore, by studying the Beatitudes faithfully one by one, we will find in them the very secrets of the universe, the secrets of true and eternal happiness.

# The First Beatitude

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

**B**EFORE considering each Beatitude separately, let us keep the following points well in mind. First, all eight Beatitudes have one common objective, namely, happiness. But they are so arranged that one complements the other in orderly progression until full perfection is reached in the last Beatitude which culminates with complete and permanent peace and happiness in unity with God. Thus, for example, the second Beatitude postulates the first, the third the first and second, and so on to the end.

Secondly, it is worthy of note that the first and last Beatitudes offer rewards in the present tense, namely, "Blessed are the poor and persecuted, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," while all the others offer their rewards in the future. In other words, God's Providence always looks after the poor and the persecuted in a special manner, with a definite assurance of heaven as the ultimate reward. Keeping these observations in mind, we

shall now proceed with the consideration of the first Beatitude.

### *The Setting*

"Blessed are the poor in spirit," are very simple words that even a child, it would seem, should be able to understand. But to get the full meaning of Our Lord's words, it might be well to begin with the immediate audience that heard Him speak, with what they believed, and with how the Lord dealt with their belief. His entire Sermon on the Mount was intended, first of all, to correct any false notions about His Spiritual Kingdom. But in no particular was there greater misunderstanding than that about poverty and the poor, and Jesus knew that the majority of those He was now speaking to belonged to that class.

7 The poor of Israel, as the Old Testament clearly indicates, were of an emotional type, material-minded, prone to complaints about their sad lot, true to God as long as He dropped manna from heaven, but sulky and rebellious as soon as they were hungry again. Moses, their great leader who led them from the land of bondage knew this very well. For that reason he promised them that if they remained faithful to God they would enjoy earthly prosperity, but that if they were unfaithful poverty and want would follow. Later this thought was distorted to mean that, if a man suffered, if he became blind or diseased, afflicted or poor, it was a sure sign of God's wrath. And for such there were no hospitals or homes for the aged, for that was a Christian idea that came later. Consequently, the poor had to fend for themselves as best they could until death relieved them of their suffering and affliction.



*Poverty From Necessity*

Even the ordinary poor of Christ's time were a despairing lot, victims of the rich and powerful, cruelly oppressed and often completely destitute. Their wants were simple enough, with bread and fish as their ordinary food. But the laborer's pay was a denarius a day, seventeen cents, scarcely enough to provide for the absolute necessities of life even where living was cheap. For all these there remained but one last hope as they vaguely recalled from their ancient prophets that a Messiah would come to preach to the poor. Could he, perhaps, be the one that was speaking to them now? Yes, on this beautiful spring day on the mountainside something extraordinary was happening. They could hardly believe their ears. Here before them stood the Great Teacher, the miracle-worker who, as they knew, had already been kind to the sick and the poor, telling them that not only was their poverty no disgrace, but that it made them eligible for the Messianic Kingdom—and not only eligible, but blessed! They did not immediately understand all He said; they could not, with all the distinctions we must read into His words even now. But for them it was enough to hear Christ tell them that poverty was not a disgrace, not necessarily a curse or punishment for sin, but that it could even be a blessed thing. At any rate, they were certain that their new-found friend did not despise them, but talked kindly to them. Besides, Jesus set them an example. He was poor, and they knew it. He was poor not by necessity, but by choice. All this buoyed up their drooping spirits and reawakened in them renewed hope and confidence for the future.

*Our Divine Model*

Christ's poverty was self-imposed because He knew that through poverty of spirit man could overcome the spirit of greed, so prevalent in all ages, which is based upon a three-fold pride of man. This is the pride in what one *has* or economic pride; the pride of what one *is* or social pride; and the pride of what one *knows* or intellectual pride. Therefore, from the cradle to the grave, by word and by example, Jesus taught us the true meaning of poverty.

First of all, to refute the contention of those who held that the pursuit of wealth was the noblest end of man, Christ became economically poor. He chose His Mother from the poorer classes who could afford to offer only doves in the Temple; His foster-father was a village carpenter; He Who owned the earth and the fullness thereof chose for His birthplace a shepherd's cave in Bethlehem, and instead of the Holy City of Jerusalem, He chose the lowly village of Nazareth for His abode. Later on He could truthfully say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man has not whereon to lay his head." And as He lived, so He died. He was poor in His death, for He was stripped of His very garments, the last remnant of His earthly possessions. He was executed on a cross erected at public expense, wrapped in a winding-sheet presented Him by friends, and buried in the grave of a stranger. Yes, He who was rich became poor for our sakes that we might become rich. And so He stands before us, the only one in all history of whom both rich and poor can say: "He came from our ranks, He is one of our own."

—The second source of pride in man is his social position.

The world is full of those who either by accident or birth or circumstance count themselves better than their fellowmen, and who glory in what they are. Again, poor people who suffer from such find consolation in the example of Christ who was abandoned by friend and foe alike. Scripture vouches for this, saying, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Cities abandoned Him: Bethlehem refused Him an inn; Nazareth drove Him from its gates; and Jerusalem stoned Him. Men abandoned Him: some of His own disciples hearing Him speak, were heard to exclaim: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" and they walked with Him no more. The needy abandoned Him and drew from Him the sweet complaint: "You will not come to me that you may have life." Others, like the nine lepers, were ungrateful for their miraculous cure. The leaders of Israel and the teachers of the Law also abandoned Him, calling Him "a glutton, a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners." And even his own apostles abandoned Him: one betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver; three abandoned Him for sleep; another denied Him at the word of a maid-servant. So, at the end of His life the Roman Governor could rightfully say: "Thy own nation has delivered Thee up to me." Here we have the King of Kings become socially poor and an outcast that we might become children of God.

Finally, when Christ began to speak to the multitudes about poverty of spirit, He was also mindful of the intellectually proud, those who are wise in their own conceits, who rely upon the sufficiency of human knowledge without faith, and who glory in their own sufficiency and superiority over their fellowmen. That is why Jesus all through His public life usually spoke to such in parables,



while to the poor and lowly He spoke directly, as in the Sermon on the Mount. For Christ knew that the intellectually proud lack humility. And Scripture says of such: "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones."

Therefore, in order to overcome intellectual pride and become poor and humble of spirit we need but to remember the darkest hours of our Savior's life which began in the Garden of Gethsemane and ended on Calvary. We hear Him cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But note that His cry of abandonment was not one of despair. A soul that despairs never cries to God. Just as the keenest pangs of hunger are felt not by the dying man who is completely exhausted, but by one battling for his life with his last ounce of strength, so abandonment is felt not by the ungodly and unholy, but by the most holy of men, our Savior in the Garden and on the cross.

Now, therefore, when we hear Jesus saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," we need but to look up and exclaim, "Behold the Poor Man." He is economically poor because stripped of His garments, socially poor because deserted by His friends, spiritually poor because He claimed nothing for Himself, (but gave all credit to God.) And if we do not possess much of this world's goods we know now that it is not a disgrace nor a curse, but frequently a blessing in disguise. I accept my lot as God wills, knowing that if faithfully borne it will merit for me life eternal.

### *Poverty by Choice*

Now that Jesus had spoken about the Beatitude of poverty, now that He had set the example of freeing Himself

from the material things of the world, many were soon to obey His counsel and emulate His example—not through necessity or circumstance, but by deliberate and free choice. Naturally, the apostles and their followers were the first to be impressed with this new doctrine of the beauty of poverty when borne for Christ's sake. Therefore, the utmost simplicity in living became to them one of the first principles of Christianity. These early Christians had all things in common, selling or disposing of their possessions and sharing the proceeds with one another. Their Master had been poor, He had counselled them to emulate Him, and they did not hesitate. These early Christians were honest and industrious working people. Even the apostles continued to toil, like St. Paul who was a tentmaker and weaver by trade or profession, and who could say, "I have not coveted any man's silver, gold, or apparel, as you yourselves know, for such things as were needed for me and them that are with me, these hands have furnished." Here was true Christian communism in practice, not for the sake of a worldly dictator, but for the love of Him who had proclaimed a new Spiritual Kingdom.)

Even the pagans were greatly impressed by this Christian spirit of (self-imposed poverty,) and the poor themselves were everywhere impressed by this new Christian doctrine and example. It gave them a new realization of their own future (spiritual possibilities.) Slaves, who were then legion, felt more like free men when they could participate in the Sacraments of the Church with their masters. It showed them how they could be blessed even in the state of slavery, the lowest form of poverty. And when others would pose the question: (What is the reward?) they could tell them what Christ had told Peter when asked a similar question:

"Everyone who has left house, or brother, or sister, or father or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." And surely the slaves, the poorest of the poor, who had given up everything, were included in this promise. Consequently, they joined the Church in large numbers. Some of them, like Pius and Callixtus, even became popes.

### *Voluntary Poverty*

Actual and voluntary poverty having been declared by Christ and the apostles a blessed thing, many people began to accept the invitation of their own free will. And note the word "invitation." Christ did not compel, but He counselled it. To the rich young man He said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and follow me." This was a counsel, not a command. And while this young man did not accept the invitation, many others have since accepted it and embraced a communal form of life under the rules of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Every member of a religious order or community freely binds himself or herself to these vows.

They are called the Evangelical Counsels. They are not, we repeat, divine precepts, but counsels to be freely accepted. "If thou *wilt* be perfect," Christ says. Hence a life under the rules of the Evangelical Counsels facilitates greater spiritual perfection for the individual as well as for society in general. For it is only through such groups that the Church can function and carry out the works of mercy, spiritual and corporal, to which she is so faithfully devoted. And it is only through religious organizations of priests, sisters and brothers that we can conduct our



schools, hospitals, homes for the aged, the poor, the sick and the needy all over the world.

This Beatitude motivates all Religious in accepting the invitation. To mention but a few, we have in the early Church people like St. Paula who though of noble birth gave all her wealth to the Roman poor; Sts. Basil, Benedict, Jerome, Augustine were others. Later we find such saints as Bernard, Ignatius, Thomas Aquinas, Dominic, Francis Xavier and Francis of Assisi. The latter, the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, gave up all in order to embrace his "Lady Poverty." "My dear Poverty," he would exclaim, "however low in the judgment of men may be thy extraction, I esteem thee since my Master has espoused Thee."

And women, like men, have been equally generous in accepting the invitation to give up all and follow their Master. Besides St. Paula, already mentioned, we have women like St. Clara who emulated St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine, St. Teresa, and numerous others. So popular had the Beatitude of voluntary poverty become during the time of St. Francis of Assisi that many men and women offered to leave their homes and families and their possessions and embrace the higher life of perfection under the Evangelical Counsels. Foreseeing what social and domestic disturbances this would create, Francis organized what is known as the Third Order which today numbers about five million souls all over the world. These people continue to live in the world, follow their respective avocations and professions, and individually and in groups observe the spirit of the Evangelical Counsels, and practice voluntary poverty in their domestic lives.

Great spiritual leaders came forth from the members of the Third Order during the course of time. Here, for

example, is but a partial list of founders of religious orders who were once Franciscan Tertiaries: St. Angela Merici, the foundress of the Ursulines; St. Ignatius Loyola, Jesuits; St. Philip Neri, Oratorians; St. Camillus of Lellis, Servants of the Sick; St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Visitation Nuns; St. Vincent de Paul, Lazarists and Daughters of Charity; St. John the Baptist de LaSalle, Brothers of the Christian Schools; St. Paul of the Cross, Passionists; St. Mary Magdalene de Postel, School Sisters of Mercy; St. Peter Julian Eymard, Priests of the Blessed Sacrament; St. John Bosco, Salesian Fathers; St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, and many others who derived their inspiration from the Poor Man of Assisi.

### *Voluntary Poverty by Detachment*

We come, finally, to another large and impressive group who have also accepted the invitation of the Lord and taken the Beatitude of poverty seriously. They live in the world, enjoy the things of earth, home life and its comforts, but have accepted the spirit of poverty by embracing a voluntary poverty by detachment. It has always been the practice of the Church to guard the faithful against excesses or over-enthusiasm in all things, including the spirit of poverty as suggested in the first Beatitude. Therefore, in the words of Pope Leo XIII, "In choosing a state of life, it is indisputable that all are at full liberty either to follow the counsel of Jesus Christ as to virginity, or to enter into the bonds of marriage." Then Leo clearly enunciates the teaching of the Church in regard to poverty and shows the difference between blessed poverty and an accursed poverty.

Pope Leo XIII shows that every man has the right to

possess property of his own, according to nature's law; that a man's children should be provided by him with all that is needed to enable them honorably to keep themselves from want and misery in the uncertainties of this mortal life. A living wage, the rights of man, social justice, a justice for which charity is no substitute, all these have been demanded for the poor by him and by his successors.

Voluntary poverty by detachment is thus dwelt upon by Pope Leo XIII: "Money and the other things which men call good and desirable, we may have in abundance or we may want altogether; as far as eternal happiness is concerned, it is no matter. The only thing that is important is to use them aright." As St. Paul taught, it is not money but the love of money that is the root of all evil. And so St. Thomas tells us: "Man should not consider his outward possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without difficulty where others are in need." So it is that all who share their economic, social or intellectual wealth with the other members of the Mystical Body of Christ also participate in the first Beatitude by being voluntarily poor by detachment.

.. The poor in spirit are those who have this interior detachment even though blessed with all manner of worldly goods, for detachment can be practiced by the rich just as avarice can be practiced by the poor. Therefore, the poor in spirit include all those who are so detached from wealth, social position, or intellectual prestige that, at the moment the Kingdom of God (demands a sacrifice), they are prepared to surrender all. In short, blessed are those who are not obsessed by their possessions; blessed are they who, whether or not they are poor in fact, are poor in their inmost spirit. Such a disposition brings peace and contentment, without anxiety or fear, a foretaste of heaven itself.



And then, says Bossuet, "The Church may be called the City of the Poor, as it is the City of God." This is

*Practical Charity*

An ardent spirit dwells with Christian love—  
The eagle's vigor in the pitying dove:  
'Tis not enough that we with sorrow sigh,  
That we the wants of pleading man supply,  
That we in sympathy with sufferers feel,  
Nor hear a grief without a wish to heal.  
Not these suffice; to sickness, pain, and woe,  
The Christian spirit loves with aid to go,  
Will not be sought, waits not for want to plead,  
But seeks the duty,—nay, prevents the need;  
Her utmost aid to every ill applies,  
And plants relief for coming miseries.

## The Second Beatitude

*"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth."*

AS PREVIOUSLY stated, all the Beatitudes are correlated, one following another in natural sequence. In other words, they are eudaemonic, which means a progressive system of ethics which defines and enforces moral obligations in relation to happiness or personal well-being. For example, in the first Beatitude our Lord promises true and everlasting happiness to those who are poor in spirit in contrast to those who wrongfully seek happiness in material wealth, sensual pleasures, and earthly power. It teaches us the doctrine of humility, the internal or mental attitude towards things outside us. The second Beatitude is a continuation of the first. It teaches us meekness, which suggests the proper attitude we should take, not towards others, but towards ourselves in order to procure true happiness. But again, like the poverty of spirit of the first Beatitude, this (meekness) in the second was an equally new and revolutionary doctrine.

*A World Without Meekness*

Many things are better understood by studying their opposites first. This is particularly true in regard to a world without (humility) and (meekness). Thus pitted against (humility) and (poverty) of spirit we have a world striving for happiness through material wealth, pleasure, and power. The oriental paradise of bodily joys was never confined to the sons of Mohammed. The same notion was popular in pagan times and even now is almost universally characteristic of non-Christian minds. It is true that as far back as the first century we have a poet like Juvenal remarking that "as your money increases, so your desire of it increases"; and earlier still, Socrates could say that the richest man is the one contented with the least; Cicero, too, thought that nothing was more honest and more magnificent than to despise money if you have it not, and if you have it, to use it for a good purpose; and Seneca, that you must command money, not be a slave to it; that if you know how to use it, it is your servant and that if you don't it is your master.

But there was an element of hypocrisy in all these declarations, for at the very time they were made numberless persons still remained in slavery and bondage, poor and oppressed. Plato, indeed, is a typical example of the haughty and conceited attitude commonly entertained towards all these when he advocated a law in every state to this effect: "Let there be no poor person in the city, let such a person be banished from the cities, and from the forum, and from the country fields, that the country may be altogether pure and free from an animal of this kind." And we know that much the same sentiment has continued to prevail in many lands to this day. When, for ex-



ample, St. Francis Xavier went in 1552 as a missionary to Japan he found the bonzes, the Buddhist monks of that country, still teaching that neither the poor nor women could be saved. And his contrary doctrine of the Gospel was the chief reason why his preaching seemed so strange to them.

Can we wonder, then, that the poor and oppressed, even during our Lord's time, knew nothing but hatred, the same sort of hatred that is now symbolized by the hammer and sickle?

### *The Counterpart*

To counteract this spirit of hatred and anger, our Lord teaches the spirit of love: to be humble and meek, as the first two Beatitudes indicate, and peace and happiness will be the reward of those who practice these virtues. But it must have seemed strange to many—and may still seem strange—to hear our Lord say: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye,' and 'A tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you not to resist the evildoer; on the contrary, if someone strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would go to law with thee and take thy tunic, let him take thy cloak as well. You have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and shalt hate thy enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For if you love those who love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans do that? And if you salute your brethren only, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do that?" (*Math.* v, 38-47).

Outrageous! cries the communist. Preposterous! cries

the materialist. Ridiculous! cries the man in want. That violates my rights! cries the rich man. That is a violation of my honor! cries the proud man. That will get me nowhere! cries the poor man. Away with anyone teaching such a doctrine! Eliminate any group or society that practices such nonsense! (That is not meekness, but weakness.) Fight for your rights! Defend your honor! Destroy the enemy! And the battle is on, a battle of hate, which results only in more hate. For as we sow, so also shall we reap, and if we sow in hate we reap in hate; violence propagates further violence; strife increases the sum of bitterness.

The fallacy in all this can be traced to one thing, namely, selfishness. And selfishness, says Bishop Sheen, "is the world's greatest sin; that is why the world hates those who hate it; why it is jealous of those who have more; why it is envious of those who do more; why it dislikes those who refuse to flatter, and why it scorns those who tell us the truth about ourselves; its whole life is inspired by the egotistical, and the personal, and its wrath is born of that self-love; the poor hate the rich not because they love the poor in spirit, but because they want to be rich themselves; and as such, every communist is really a capitalist without any cash in his pocket."

### *Meaning of Meekness*

To counteract self-love, our divine Savior gave us the second Beatitude. It too is based on love, the love of God and one's neighbor. Humility and meekness, as we said before, are correlative terms; humility refers to our attitude under duress towards others, meekness to our attitude towards ourselves under similar conditions. Christian humility means freedom from pride, anger, or arrogance;

lowliness of mind; a modest estimate of one's worth in the sight of God; self-abasement by which I ascribe all the good that is in me to the goodness of God, and all the evil to myself.

Meekness, on the other hand, is the counterpart of anger and self-conceit; it is not weakness, but self-possession; it is that virtue by which one controls the combative, violent, and pugnacious powers of our nature; it is gentle, kind, pitiful, indulgent, mild of temper, not easily provoked to anger or irritated, patient under injuries, not vain or haughty or resentful, mild and moderate in action, calm and composed when one's person or character is attacked, but firm and determined when principles are at stake. But meekness is never weakness. It is not an easygoing temperament, sluggish and hard to arouse. It is not a spineless passivity allowing everyone to walk over us. Only the principles of God's righteousness arouse a meek man. Scripture calls Moses a meek man, but he broke the tables of stone when he found his fickle people disobeying God. Jesus Himself could say: "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your souls," yet He drove the buyers and sellers from the Temple when they prostituted His Father's House.

### *Christ Taught Meekness by Word and Example*

When Christ's person was attacked He remained meek and humble. When men laughed Him to scorn He said nothing. He approached the dead daughter of Jairus, oblivious to men's insults, and restored her to life. When Judas betrayed Him with a kiss, Jesus addressed him as "Friend." On the cross He prayed for forgiveness of His enemies, and in every other abuse of His person we hear



no word of protest against injustice. His final reply was: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." A striking contrast, indeed, between the nailed hand of the Savior pleading for forgiveness and the clenched-fisted generation who sent Him to the cross! Here is the difference between Christian meekness and violence; violence to one's self and violence to one's neighbor!

### *Christian Examples of Meekness*

In the words of Tertullian, "A Christian is no one's enemy." And that is what the saints have learned, and what every good Christian must learn. Next to Christ Himself, Mary, His Blessed Mother, was a typical example of true Christian meekness. Nothing demonstrates this better than her beautiful *Magnificat* as recorded by St. Luke. And St. Joseph, Mary's beloved spouse, was always meek and humble of heart. St. Paul is another typical example. Once the impetuous and fiery Saul, he became the meek and humble Apostle Paul who never tired of preaching Christ and Him crucified. And speaking of himself, he reminded his listeners that "the foolish thing of the world has God chosen to put to shame the wise, and the weak thing to put to shame the strong, the base things and the despised to bring to naught the things that are."

It is only when we hear others describe this virtue that we gradually come to the full understanding of the beauty and importance of the word "meekness." Newman refers to it when he describes a Christian gentleman as one who never inflicts pain. For meekness, like gracious manners, exudes a captivating charm; like grace and harmony, meekness sheds soft lustre on the way of life. St. Bernard de-

scribes it thus: "To be great before God by the practice of virtue, yet little and vile in one's own eyes, that is the humility which is so agreeable to God and so rare in men." Abbé Hogan simply calls it "self-abasement"; St. Augustine, "the foundation of all virtue"; St. Chrysostom, "the head of virtues, and the mother of wisdom." St. Francis of Assisi was so meek and humble that he refused to become a priest, but remained a deacon all his life. His confession of unworthiness remains a classic to this day. "I am," he says, "unworthy of the day which lights me, of the air I breathe, of the bread I eat, of the water I drink, of the clothes that cover me. I am unworthy of all light in my soul, of every good movement in my heart, of every grace, every consolation, of every happiness of living in this world, of seeing God in the next, of being in Purgatory with the just. But of what am I worthy? Of all evils, of desolation, of dryness, of trouble, of all infirmities, of all contempt, of eternal fires." And he meant every word of it.

Another is St. Francis de Sales, known as the model of meekness. He was of noble birth, high-tempered and irascible by nature. He realized his failing, and by persevering efforts and prayer became so meek and humble that many declared that they saw in him the reincarnation of Christ Himself. On one occasion, as a bishop, he was insulted and threats were added to injuries. Nevertheless, he remained calm and tranquil. His friends reproached him for his senseless humility and meekness. "You believe," he replied, "that I am insensible. Put your hand upon my heart, and you will see, by the quickness of its pulsations, how greatly it feels the storm, and that it would break out into anger if I did not restrain it. But would you wish that by allowing a quick and impatient word to escape I

should lose in one moment all the meekness that, by dint of efforts over myself, I have endeavored to acquire during four-and-twenty years?" Again, "Whatever you may do to me," he said to another who abused him, "I will hold my heart in both my hands, and you will not succeed in making me angry."

There are numerous others like St. Dominic who knelt at the gates of the cities where he was to preach and begged God not to afflict those places because of his personal sins. Or St. Ignatius who left his brilliant soldier's career and, at the age of thirty-three, began to study Latin with mere boys. Even after he became the founder of the great Jesuit Order he submitted meekly to many persecutions and was even known to assist in the kitchen at the most menial tasks. But let us turn for a moment to the rewards Christ has promised to the meek.

### *Rewards to the Meek*

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth," says the Savior in the second Beatitude. The word "earth" must be figuratively interpreted. First of all, meekness is self-possession, self-realization; it gives us a well-balanced self-control of all our faculties of mind and heart. In the words of St. Augustine, it signifies a certain solidity and stability of perpetual inheritance where the soul, by a good affection, rests in its place as the body rests upon the earth. This is the rest and life of the saints, of the meek who yield to improbity and resist not evil, but overcome evil by good. Then, in answer to the question: What are the riches that the earth will offer the meek? St. Augustine continues: "They shall be delighted in the multitude of peace. The proud are delighted in the multi-



tude of gold, in the multitude of slaves, in the multitude of luxurious banquets; but what will be the riches and delights of the meek? The multitude of peace. Their gold will be peace, their possessions peace, their life peace; they will love and desire it in their houses, in their business, in their wives, in their children, in their servants, in their friends, in their enemies; whatever they possess or desire will be peace to them; for God will be their peace for ever."

Many dislike the meek because they are a constant reproach to those who refuse to accept the second Beatitude. But frequently, too, their works live long after them and attract others by their meekness. Father Fernandez, one of the companions of St. Francis Xavier, is a typical example. He was preaching to an assembled crowd in the Indies, when a man came near as if to speak to him and deliberately spat in his face. The missionary, without saying a word or manifesting the least emotion, took out his handkerchief, wiped his face, and went on with his sermon as if nothing had happened. The people were filled with amazement at his meekness. Among them was one learned doctor who, reflecting on what he had seen, said to himself: "Surely this stranger must be right in saying that the doctrine which he announces is a heavenly doctrine, for a law which inspires such greatness of soul and which enables its disciples to gain so perfect a victory over themselves, can only come from God."

The sermon ended, and the doctor publicly acknowledged that the virtue of the preacher had convinced him, and he now asked for baptism, which was administered with all possible solemnity. This illustrious conversion was followed by many others, a convincing proof that example is the best sermon. Therefore, as St. Anselm says,

whatever you do, do all for future benefit in the expectation of the eternal recompense; a future, not a present recompense is promised to the saints.

*I Know the Hand That Is Guiding Me*

I know the hand that is guiding me  
Through the shadow to the light,  
And I know that all betiding me  
Is meted out aright.

I know that the thorny path I tread  
Is ruled by a golden line,  
The darker the woof in life's crossed thread  
The deeper the rich design.

Thus knowing I love, and will love far more  
Than in cheerier days now flown,  
Till I moor my bark to the tideless shore,  
And know, even as I am known.

# The Third Beatitude

*"Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

**E**VER since Adam and Eve fell from grace man has entered this world with a cry and left it with a sigh. St. Cyprian says: "Everyone of us, when he is born and received in the urn of this world, takes his beginning from tears; and, although still unconscious and ignorant of all things, he knows nothing else in the very earliest birth except to weep." And with Tennyson, when in his *In Memoriam* he asks "but what am I?" we are forced to reply:

An infant crying in the night,  
An infant crying for the light,  
And with no language but a cry.

St. Thomas More, while lying in prison awaiting martyrdom for his faith, wrote a book entitled *Dialogue of Comfort under Tribulation* in which he says: "If imprisonment be lack of liberty to go where we list, there is no man really free. For a prison is a place where criminals are confined until they be led out for execution, and in



this sense I argue the whole world is a prison, and God is our jailor."

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,  
That is not paid with moan;  
For we are born in others' pain  
And perish in our own.

Try as we will, we cannot escape the grief of life. "The happiness of man lasts not long," says Pindar. "From time's first records," says Aeschylus, "the diviner's voice gives the sad heart a sense of misery." And Byron echoes this thought when he tells us:

Mirth has less of play than bitterness.  
For many a stoic eye and aspect stern,  
Mark hearts where grief hath naught to learn,  
And many a withering thought lies hid, not lost,  
In smiles that least befit who bear them most.

• *How the World Views Suffering*

Here, then, we have the mournful picture of the world in general, and especially the mournful state of the poor and the down-trodden like those who first heard Jesus declare in His third Beatitude: *Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted*. Here they were, mourning over their sad lot in living in poverty, writhing slaves under the heel of the conquering Roman. Grieving for the departed glory of their nation, they long with vague expectancy for a material-minded, conquering Messiah, who would liberate them from their bodily miseries. And now to hear a strange message about happiness in sorrow, happiness in pain! Who had ever heard of such a thing? No wonder Scripture tells us that very many of them rejected Christ and even cast Him out of their city.

And others since that time have also turned away from Christ because they could not regard mourning as a blessing, but always as a curse. Laughter is the goal they are seeking, and sorrow is the enemy most to be feared. Rather blessed are they who are rich and popular and who enjoy every possible pleasure. Blessed are they who are satisfied with themselves. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die! Such are the beatitudes of the world; yet, what person has ever found more than momentary happiness and comfort in them? This is a pure pagan, not a Christian, concept of happiness. They confuse mourning with melancholy; theirs is the mourning of sensuous men, the mourning of Babylon, without charity and without peace.

### *How the Christian Views Suffering*

Christ Himself did not fully expect those who first heard this third Beatitude to grasp immediately its full meaning. Even to the apostles it must at first have sounded strange. Indeed, all the Beatitudes must have seemed strange and obscure until their full import became clear through the Passion and Death of the Savior. And it was only after the Passion and Resurrection that those who listened, the apostles included, were able to see the connection between the Mount of Beatitudes and the Mount of Golgotha. After that they understood how there could be blessedness in mourning witnessing in Christ the Supreme Blessedness of the Supreme Mourner.

But it is wrong to say that the third Beatitude of our Lord is either a condemnation of laughter and joy or a glorification of sorrow and tears. As a matter of fact, did Jesus not upbraid the Pharisees because they wore long faces and looked sad when they fasted? Do we not sing on

Easter morning, "Rejoice! I say; always rejoice"? There is a difference between the beatitude of the world, "Laugh, and the world laughs with you," and the Beatitude of the Lord, "Blessed are they that mourn." "This difference," says Bishop Sheen, "is not that the world brings laughter and our Lord brings tears. It is not even a choice of having or not having sadness; it is rather a choice of where we shall put it: at the beginning or at the end. In other words, which comes first, laughter or tears? Shall we place our joys in time or in eternity? for we cannot have them both. Shall we laugh on earth, or laugh in heaven? for we cannot do both. Shall we mourn before we die or after we die? for we cannot mourn in both. We cannot have our reward both in heaven and on earth. Did not our Lord declare that at the end of the world the worldly will hear this: 'You have already had your reward'?"

"There are but two roads to choose from, the royal road of the Resurrection that leads to eternal life, or the road of selfishness which leads ultimately to eternal death. The first is strewn with thorns, but if we traverse it far enough along life's way we will discover that it ends in a garland of roses; the other road is filled with fading roses, but if traversed far enough, it ends in a bed of thorns; the choice is ours: fast first and then feast, or feast first and end in perpetual mourning."

### *Christian Joy Through Mourning*

Furthermore, Christian mourning never leads to despair or melancholia. The world sees no motive for suffering. But when the Christian mourns he knows the reason why; he sees in suffering a supernatural motive for doing so. Cornelius a Lapide, a recognized authority, describes these



motives of Christian mourners as follows: First, those who bear with patience the trials and sorrows permitted or sent by God; second, those who weep for their own sins and the sins of others; third, those who desire Heaven and lament their exile on earth through love of God. In this manner even the heartbreaks that come from human ills can be spiritualized into sanctification by referring them all to God and by enduring them all for His sake; not in discontent, inquietude, rebellion, like "those who have no hope," but by associating them with the tears of the Man of Sorrows.

### *Christ Shows Us How to Mourn*

To love is to suffer. There is no more convincing proof of our affection for others than through suffering. "Greater love than this no man has, than that he lay down his life for his friends." And Christ did just that out of love for us, and He is our Exemplar and our Comforter. In fact, was not His whole life one of mourning? As an infant, we find Him escaping the blood-stained sword of a tyrant, king Herod, by fleeing with His mournful parents, Joseph and Mary, into Egypt, the land of exile. Until the age of thirty He quietly works unnoticed and unheralded in Nazareth. And when He ventured forth the cry is raised: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

And how He mourned for the poor and afflicted! During His three years in public life Jesus spends most of His time amongst the poor, the sick, the lame, and the halt who pour out their mournful streams of woe at His feet. And they hear Him assuringly say: "I have compassion on the multitude." There is no record in the Gospel that He ever laughed, but there are many records of His tears.

He openly wept at the grave of His friend Lazarus; He wept over the city that was to crucify Him, saying mournfully: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, as the hen doth gather her chicks under her wings, and thou wouldest not!" Then He wept tears of crimson in the Garden of Gethsemane, as the "desperate tides of the great world's anguish forced through the channel of a single heart."

His former friends forsook Him; His enemies constantly tried to ensnare Him; they lied about Him, even wanted to stone Him to death as a blasphemer. His agony was so excruciating that He sweated drops of blood, forcing Him to cry out: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." One apostle gave Him the kiss of betrayal; the others fled in cowardice. A mere servant of the high priest was so bold as to strike Him; Pilate had Him scourged and then abandoned Him to the fury of His enemies; He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and finally He was nailed to the cross as a criminal. On the cross He died, mocked, blasphemed, seemingly abandoned even by God. Rightfully, therefore, could He cry out: "See, is there any sorrow like my sorrow!"

### *Love Is Our Motive for Mourning*

"Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth!" And no other creature did Christ love more than Mary, His Mother, and His foster-father, Joseph. He loved His Blessed Mother Mary not merely because she was His mother, but because she was His only sinless creature, "our tainted nature's solitary boast." All Mary's life she suffered mental anguish over what wicked men would try to do to her Son.

She mourned for Him always, because from the day of Simon's prediction to her in the Temple she saw before her the shadow of the cross, and when the end came that is where we find her—mourning at the foot of the cross. Beside the Man of Sorrows also stood the Mother of Sorrows. Mary understood. She knew on His word that this mourning was the way to blessedness.

The apostles, too, could now understand. Once they were puzzled when they stood on the Mount of Beatitudes and heard Jesus tell them: "Blessed are you when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." It was all clear to them now. That was what they were to get for serving Him. And the minute they were consecrated they sat, not on a throne of glory as they had once hoped, but on the mourner's bench with the Man of Sorrows and the Mother of Sorrows. Peter took the first mourner's seat. He had denied the Lord, and for that he was a mourner all his life; so much so, that tradition tells us furrows formed in his cheeks from the constant flow of tears wept over the memory of his denial and of what his Master endured on the cross. All the other apostles wept too, wept over their failure to stand by their Master in spite of pain, and in memory of what Jesus endured for love of them. So deeply was the thought of Cavalry seared into the heart and soul and mind of St. Paul that he never tired preaching Christ and Him Crucified. So intense was his desire to suffer and die and be with Christ that he exclaimed: "Unhappy man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?"

*The Christian Ideal of Mourning*

This, then, is the Christian concept of mourning as taught us by the Man of Sorrows. "Words for the Christian," exclaims Digby, "deep, mysterious and mild, as one might have thought never before met the ear of mortal man, sounding, as if from the voice of some angelic marshal, fanning us with swan-like wings, while the gates of lucid mansions opened to the music of this unearthly strain, which affirms that those who mourn are blessed, for that comfort shall be theirs.

"All generations of men have mourned, but how vain would be the search into ancient history in hopes of discovering that they were therefore blessed! Hear however a new voice, and sweet indeed in mortal ears, which consoleth those who mourn with the assurance that they shall be comforted; and since this is the voice of Him, Whose knowledge is the law of nature and of grace, we may be sure that henceforth the study of history will bring new results and present very different phenomena from any thing that philosophers had ever before observed.

"By nature, as men, independent of all tradition and revelation, they are sooner or later compelled, either by the experience of present sorrows or by the fear and anticipation of future evils, to fall into the ranks of those who mourn—or rather, as Cicero says, of the miserable. There is no avoiding this. As reasonably might they hope to be dispensed from death, as to pass through life, short as it is, exempt from the experience and the thoughts of woe. If they look at the world which surrounds them and mark the countenances that front them on every side, they will find the greatest and most heroic men visibly written mourners in their looks, like Spenser's gentle knight . . .



too solemn sad." For the Christian that mourns, "tearful eyes become crystal lenses that focus heaven down to earth." For such,

All day the stars are in the sky,  
But night reveals them to our eye.  
When freedom to the winds is tossed,  
The prison bars reveal what's lost.  
The grapes are crushed to sparkling wine,  
Before a cup holds Blood Divine.  
Our joys are measured by their loss;  
Our lives are best when near the cross.

The Christian begins by focusing everything upon the Man of Sorrows Who suffered and died in order to communicate His love to us. We mourn in spirit because our Savior is loved so little and so much offended. We grieve over the eternal loss of so many souls on account of it. We mourn over the constant persecution of Christians and the Church all over the world, over obstacles placed in the way to the spread of the Christian faith, the infidelity of nations and individuals, their temporal miseries and sufferings. For the love of all these we willingly suffer and mourn as did the soldier fallen in battle, his legs shattered and his life-blood spilling upon the ground. His near-by buddy tried to console him, saying, "Tough luck, too bad they had to take all this from you." As a Christian soldier, his immediate reply was: "They didn't take it, but I gave it." In love for his country and his flag, for his home and fireside, for the preservation of Christian ideals and principles this brave soldier could smile, suffer, and die without a whimper or complaint.

We, too, can enjoy the blessings of this Beatitude when we mourn over our sins; when we are appalled at the thought that we dared to insult a holy, just and gracious

God; when we reason with ourselves like Dismas, the repentant thief on the cross, saying, "We, indeed, suffer justly, for we are receiving what our deeds deserved; but this man has done nothing wrong." And like Dismas, we can say to Jesus: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." For we know that mortal sin is forgiven through penance, but temporal penalties are also exacted by God, and we can make amends for these through suffering. Was not Adam pardoned, and yet he had to suffer and die? Moses and Aaron were pardoned, and yet were punished by not being permitted to enter the land of promise. David was pardoned, and yet was punished and had to suffer much. Therefore, if we mourn because we have crucified Christ through sin, there is pardon: "Father, forgive them." If we have pierced once more Mary's heart by sin, there is pardon also: "Son, behold thy mother." And if there are tears in our eyes, they too shall be wiped away: "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Such tears are followed by joy and gladness. What happiness awaited the prodigal son when he returned home after deeply deploring his sin! What joy the penitent thief experienced when Jesus promised him paradise! What joy and peace Mary Magdalen felt when Christ pardoned her and commended her love!

### *Mourning for Others*

What mourning can do for others is beautifully exemplified in the life of St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine. For eighteen long years she so prayed and wept over her wayward son that Augustine could say of her: "She was twice my mother, in the flesh that I might be born into this earthly light, and in heart that I might be born into

the light eternal." For Monica's tears and prayers saved the soul of Augustine. When the Bishop of Madura, and later St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, heard of her entreaties and tears, they said to her: "Go, and God be with you. It cannot be that the son of those tears should be lost."

Later, Augustine himself tells us that she accepted these words as a voice from heaven. Twice every day she would go to church with her tears and her prayers. This made Monica a saint, and Augustine the saint was the triumph of her sanctity. Before her death she witnessed the conversion of her son, and when her tears were dried Augustine's began to flow. He himself tells us how deformed, and filthy, and spotted and ulcerous he saw himself in the eyes of God. "My perplexed and darkened sight," he wrote, "was daily being healed by the mordant salve of wholesome grief. I gave my pent-up tears license to flow as they would and laid them as a bed for my heart. And it found rest upon them, for the ears alone could hear my weeping, not man, who might have scorned me." And he was not ashamed of his tears, for he continues: "And now let who will judge me as he will, and if he find sin therein that I wept for my mother—and such a mother—let him not deride me, but rather if he be of large charity, let him weep himself for my sins and ask pardon of Christ for me."

### *Neither Melancholy nor Despair*

Therefore, the Christian concept of mourning as conveyed to us from the Mount of Beatitudes is far removed from the pagan view which leads to melancholy and despair. A mournful Christian may be serious, but never sad. Burton, who wrote a treatise on melancholy, points to the friars and monks as being men who are continually

under its dreadful influence. But the truth of the matter is, cheerfulness appears as one of the first results from entering the pleasant cloister's pale. St. Bernard, himself a monk, gives the reply to Burton's unwarranted assertion by saying: "Do you see these novices? They are but just come, but just converted. What appears in them is only a flower, for the season of fruit is not yet arrived. This new conversion is a flower. They assume a face of discipline and a good composition of their whole body. I grant that what appears is pleasing—that greater negligence of exterior dress, fewer words, a more joyful countenance, a more bashful look—yet these are but flowers, and rather the promise of fruit than fruit itself." And in another place, addressing a nun, he writes: "The Holy Ghost cannot suffer the odious sadness of the children of the world to remain in the soul of his servants. Let a spiritual joy remain always within you as a testimony that you are at peace with God. This innocent and tranquil joy is an assured mark of virtue and an earnest of sanctity. If it were not so, David would not have said, 'Rejoice ye just in the Lord and leap for joy.'"

Christian mourning, therefore, knows how to differentiate. Wherever Christian faith is strong, mourning at first sight seems to have disappeared entirely. As of old, so now the persecutors and enemies of our faith can but exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another." For Christian mourning fills and invigorates man with hope that leads to blissful ends. How great that hope is in the minds and hearts of Christians, and how it flourishes and thrives in them, always was, and is today, the amazement of their adversaries. They wonder at the lack of despair and trouble of mind in such. And do you want to



know the secret? It is the *motive* which prompts a Christian to mourn. Our motive is based on love, love of God and love of our neighbor. Love begets sacrifice, and sacrifice begets self-denial and mortification. But for the non-Christian, says Fichte, "there is no longer any self-denial, no longer any sacrifices, for the self which is to be denied. the objects which are to be sacrificed, have been removed from their sphere of vision and estranged from their affections. This denial, these sacrifices can only excite wonder in those who continue to value the objects of them and who have not yet given them up; when once they are given up, they vanish into nothing, and we find that we have lost nothing. Therefore, to them all corporal austerities are meaningless until they accept our Christian point of view. Not my will, but Thine be done, O Lord!"

### *Not My Way*

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,  
However dark it be;  
Lead me by Thine own hand,  
And choose the path for me.  
I dare not choose my lot;  
I would not if I might;  
Choose Thou for me, My Lord,  
So shall I walk all right.

The kingdom that I seek  
Is Thine; so let the way  
That leads to it be Thine,  
Else I must surely stray.  
Hold Thou my cup of life;  
With joy or sorrow fill  
As best to Thee may seem;  
Choose Thou my good and ill.

Choose Thou for me my friends,  
My sickness or my health;  
Choose Thou my cares for me,  
My poverty or wealth.  
Not mine, not mine the choice,  
In either great or small;  
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,  
My Wisdom, and my All.

# The Fourth Beatitude

*"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied."*

**T**HE human heart is a hungry heart. It seems nothing on earth will satisfy its cravings for long. The child soon tires of his toys. Youth lives in high hopes and brilliant plans for a time, but the bloom of youth soon fades as the music dies and only its echo remains. The more advanced in years enter a period of frustration leaving years behind them with few accomplishments, many failures, many betrayals by friends, and little to look forward to for the future. So, much like Solomon in all his glory, most of us can cry out with a hungry and unsatisfied heart, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Or, like the great St. Augustine, "We are restless until we rest in Thee, O Lord!"

"They shall be satisfied." To be satisfied is to be happy; and to be happy is to be good; and to be good does not consist in what one says, or in the way one says it, but in one's inward life, right conduct, and proper attitude toward God and man. As we have already seen, many men

seek happiness in wealth, pleasure, and power, but these things frequently lead to sin which leaves the soul empty and unhappy. Their counterpart is poverty of spirit, humility and meekness, and mourning for the loss of spiritual happiness through sin. These latter, as the first three Beatitudes demonstrate, lead to everlasting happiness. The fourth and fifth Beatitudes are a continuation of the previous three and bring us to the second phase of spiritual happiness. In the words of St. Thomas, the fourth and fifth are the Beatitudes of the active life of a Christian who, freed from evil, engages in the pursuit of good with all the ardor of his heart. But the active life is a social life, a family life. Therefore, the fourth Beatitude deals with justice, while the fifth deals with the qualities of soul that go beyond the bare demands of justice, namely, generosity and mercy. So, here we begin with this second stage of spiritual perfection, namely, justice. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied."

### *Human Justice*

In a more restricted sense, justice—human justice, if you will—is concerned with our obligations to our neighbor with giving every man his due. Knowing how our divine Savior always had compassion on the multitude, we must rightfully infer that in this Beatitude He was not only speaking of universal righteousness or justice, but was also considering the immediate bodily and mental hunger and thirst of the crowd that had come out to hear Him. We know, too, from Scripture that our Lord's preaching was so electrifying that the multitude, in their enthusiasm to hear Him would at times forget all about the needs of their bodies. You may recall the miracle of the loaves and



fishes when He fed five thousand men, besides women and children, with five barley loaves and two fishes. And, no doubt, on the occasion of the Sermon on the Mount many of them were hungry, as they were nearly always hungry, for while bread and fish were cheap enough, even these were not always available. Yes, Jesus undoubtedly included human justice when He announced this Beatitude, for in the same Sermon on the Mount He taught them to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Human justice always seemed to be uppermost in Christ's mind, and they who work for that justice on earth are always blessed by Him. That is why human justice has always been one of the strongest desires, one of the strictest commands, in His Church. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were no new discoveries in our era, no new code of morality. But like her Founder, the Church has always been solicitous for the poor and the hungry. She has condemned the violation of the rights of man, insisted on strict human justice, and on reparation if that justice has been violated. She has always protected the poor, the weak, and the unfortunate. She has always been the best friend the working-man ever had. One has but to read the history of the Church, and especially to study the Encyclicals of the Popes, in particular those of Leo XIII, Pius XI, and Pius XII during the last three quarters of a century, and see there the true Christian attitude in demanding for all a way of life which, in the words of Pius XII, "must be actuated by justice and crowned by charity."

### *Divine Justice Broader in Scope*

Now that His listeners understood the meaning of human justice, our divine Savior could go on and tell them

more about justice in its broader sense. For this Beatitude meant more than the mere insistence upon the Bill of Rights for man; it was also a Spiritual Bill of Rights for God. Material things, however perfect, however much they are due to God's creatures, are but passing. They are not the primary considerations of God's Kingdom. Christ made this clear when He said: "Your Father knows that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Therefore, real justice in its broader sense is defined as righteousness, holiness of life, doing all God's will: It is the conformity of our entire life to the divine law, love of God and our neighbor. It is in this sense that Bossuet, speaking of the fourth Beatitude, says that "the whole life of man, the whole constitution of society, notwithstanding all defects and abuses, was a continued display of its power."

*Zeal, or Hunger and Thirst for Souls,  
the Ultimate Objective*

Hence, it was not alone the golden rule that Christ came to reaffirm. His primary mission was to save souls, to bring them to eternal happiness, to bequeath to them the Kingdom of Heaven, a new kingdom in which He would give them such manna as they had never tasted or dreamed of, citizenship such as they had never visualized. That is the true and broader meaning of the fourth Beatitude: a promised blessedness that would come to those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness and holiness before God. That was the mission of the Messiah who, as Daniel had foretold, came into the world "that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be

abolished, and even everlasting justice be brought, and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled, and the Saint of Saints may be anointed." Thus, one of the loveliest titles given to the Messiah by the prophets was the Just One: "Drop dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the Just One." Hence the full meaning of this Beatitude is this: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after God, the Just One, for they shall be filled with Him; blessed are they who hunger and thirst for truth and Christian perfection, for they shall be satisfied.

### *Hunger and Thirst With Zeal*

No tongue, however eloquent, can describe the pangs of thirst of the Savior on the cross. In a spiritual sense, "hunger and thirst" mean an ardent desire and craving of the soul for God and heavenly things. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God." This is the zeal Christ manifested in so many of His acts. His teaching the Doctors in the Temple at twelve years of age was an impatience to teach men the sweetness of His Father's ways. At the beginning of His public life we find Him driving merchants out of the Temple in fulfilment of the prophecy: "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." He meets people in their homes, on the highways, at the public well, and tells them about the everlasting fountains. He speaks of the harvest being great and laborers few. In fiery zeal He exclaims: "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I, but that it be kindled." And one of His last words from the cross was "I thirst!"

*Hunger and Thirst Mean Action*

Hunger and thirst are signs of health and action. It is hunger and thirst that open up the doors of knowledge and lead the student to delve into books for the rich treasures of knowledge and wisdom. The eagle hungers and thirsts for the open skies where he can soar; the lion loves to roam in the thickest jungle; the deer will never be contented except in a dark forest; the fish can exist only in water; and the worm hungers and thirsts for the earth to bury itself. And where do *we* find complete rest and happiness? Only when we have hungered and thirsted for God and the things of God and have had our fill. We were created erect, with eyes focused on heaven, unlike the beasts whose heads are drooping and whose eyes are fixed upon the earth. Like St. Stanislaus Kostka, each one of us can say, "I am born for higher things." And to attain that goal we must be men of action. A mere longing for knowledge does not make an educated student; the mere longing to climb a mountain does not make a mountain-climber; and mere longing for God brings no fulness to a hungry heart. We must dream and then act like the great Raphael who, when he was asked how he painted such wonderful pictures, replied: "I dream dreams, and I see visions; then I paint my dreams and paint my visions."

*The Early Christians Point the Way*

This is the kind of zeal, of hunger and thirst for justice, which the apostles inherited directly from Christ. This was the zeal which broke in blazing glory upon the world as the apostles and disciples of Christ left the Cenacle on that first Pentecostal day. Without armies, without



weapons or prestige, fortified only with determination and the sword of the Holy Spirit and a command from Christ to preach His message of justice and peace to every creature, they faced a hostile and pagan world. With but a handful of faithful followers, they soon penetrated the Temple, the synagogues, and pagan houses of worship. Shortly after we find them in the very centers of power and learning, in pagan Greece and Rome, spreading their message of Christian justice until, like a prairie fire, a similar zeal had taken root in every stratum of society. Rich and poor, high and low became enthused, and travelers and missionaries were soon found in every quarter of the globe, teaching the ever-growing number of faithful the same message of justice and peace. Then followed one of the most glorious chapters in the history of Christianity—the Middle Ages. They are called the Dark Ages by some historians who dismiss zeal and intense love of God with the sneer of "mysticism," and regard religion as something incidental to human life and progress. Though these centuries had their share of crimes and evil, there was, in the words of one historian, always prominent in them, "infinite piety, infinite horror of sin, and infinite desire of justice." These Ages of Faith were characterized by a hungering and thirsting for justice.

All ages have been marked by certain leading passions, which have impelled men to pursue some particular object of apparent good. But no matter of which age we speak, there were always those who strove for eternal happiness of the soul, for the realization of justice in compliance with the will of God. They recognized the need of a divine object for that ardent craving of the soul which has led so many to great deeds of heroism and has won for the Ages of Faith the admiration of the world. Thus

St. Augustine, who had tasted the fleeting pleasures of time but turned from them to spiritual delights, exclaimed: "My soul thirsts after thee, said holy Israel's king. Mark, how he thirsted. There are those who thirst, but not after God. Whoever feels the ardor of desire, that desire is the thirst of his soul. And see how many desires are in the hearts of men! One desires gold, another passions, another cattle, another houses, another honors. See how many desires, and how few men there are who ever say, 'My soul thirsteth after Thee,' for men thirst after the world, and they know not that they are in the desert of Idumaea, where their souls ought to thirst after God."

Since we are still reaping the fruits and basking in the glories of those heroic Christians of old, let us recount but a few of their many accomplishments. Monasteries were established everywhere and became the spiritual and material fortresses for the defence of the lowly. The arts and sciences flourished. Various knight-hoods and brother-hoods were organized for the protection of the widow and orphan, to redeem the captive, to exercise all the works of charity, and to defend the rights of every individual. What else were the Crusades but a mighty demand for justice? The motto of the young Gareth in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* was, "Live pure, speak true, fight wrong, follow the King." That was also the motto of all the knights and the crusaders of old.

And as the knowledge of the Christian faith spread, the love for God and religion increased in proportion, for "when anything of this perfect good is uncovered and manifested to the soul, as if in a moment there arises in that man a desire of approaching to this perfect good and of uniting himself to it. The greater is this desire, the more is revealed to him, the more he desires and is drawn.

Thus man is drawn to a conjunction with the eternal good, and this is the drawing of the Father."

*Hunger and Thirst for Justice Spread*

Love is diffusive and tends to communicate itself to others. Hence, this early Christian enthusiasm soon penetrated the rank and file of the faithful at large. For history records that from the very beginning, after the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord, His disciples were always in the temple praising and blessing God. Philo Judaes, in his *De Vita Christianorum*, tells us how the Christians passed their time in public psalmody and hymns, keeping vigils during the night and singing in praise of God, making stations at altars and joining in alternate chorus. Lucian, the atheist, in one of his dialogues ridicules the Christians for this. Cardinal Bona answers him thus: "The night is for contemplation, the day for action." And St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom explain the particular object of each hour's devotion. At the rising of the sun (6 a.m.) it was to return thanks to God; at tierce (9 a.m.) to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost at this hour; at sext (12 noon) the fastening of Christ to the cross; at none (3 p.m.) his giving up the ghost; at the setting of the sun (6 p.m.) to thank God for the mercies of the past day. Eventually, these public daily prayers developed into the Divine Office which today is recited by all Catholic priests and in cloisters all over the world. Some of our most beautiful hymns also gradually came into being through these public devotions. For example, the *Veni Sancti Spiritus* is attributed to Herman or to Pope Innocent III; the *Dies Irae* is ascribed to Thomas Celanus of the Order of St. Francis; of the same Order was Jacopo-

nus, who composed the *Stabat Mater*, and Peter Compostella, the probable author of the *Salve Regina* and the *Alma Redemptoris*.

### *Symbolism Enters*

Symbolism is the use of visible objects of nature such as the lily, pelican, stag, lamb, fish, loaf, cup, and so forth, to signify the spiritual and invisible things of faith. In the words of Durandus, "Everything in the Church is full of divine signification and mystery. Everything in it abounds in celestial sweets, when one knows how to look at it, when one knows how to draw the honey from the stone, and the oil from the hardest flint. Who can enable us to do this? Lord, the well is deep, and I have no vessel wherewith to draw the water! Lo, it is for the priests, the dispensers of the mysteries, to comprehend and reveal them to others."

### *Churches Grow*

All this necessitated larger and larger churches to accommodate the devout faithful. Those of means came forward to contribute their wealth for that purpose. St. Helena, mother of the emperor Constantine, and St. Paula, the companion of St. Jerome, are typical examples. This resulted in the transfer of the Agape or Love Feast, as the Holy Sacrifice and Communion was then called, from the homes of individuals where small groups had gathered in the beginning, to the larger churches. More elaborate vestments and ceremonies followed; regular feasts of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints were established, all of which, in the words of one writer, "transport into



the presence of all the great and good that have adorned the Church in past time, the apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, monks, hermits, virgins, widows, and all the saints of God. How it raises up their image before the mind's eye; how it carries us into the colosseum of pagan Rome, into the catacombs, the deserts of the Thebaid, into the caves of the mountains and forests, into the cells and monasteries of the Middle Ages, into the confines of the ineffable presence of the elect in glory! How, returning to ourselves, it reminds us of every evil to be shunned in the passage of mortal life, and of every good to be desired; how it instructs, elevates, and ravishes the soul, only let this be considered."

### *What Motivated the Early Christians*

St. Bonaventure tells us what motivated the faithful to crowd their churches. "Some hastened thither," he says, "moved by the force of calamity to lay their sorrows at the feet of Jesus. Others came to desire some grace and especial mercy, knowing that the heavenly Father can refuse nothing to His Son. Others were constrained to fly thither to proclaim their gratitude and to pour forth the love of the thankful heart, knowing that there is nothing so worthy of being presented to God as the sacred body and blood of the eternal victim. Others pressed forward to give glory to God and to honor His saints, for it is in the celebration of these mysteries of love that we can pay worthy homage to His adorable majesty and testify reverence for those who served Him. Lastly, others hastened on the wings of charity and compassion, for it was there that they could hope to obtain salvation for the living and rest for the dead."

*The World Afire with Hunger and Thirst for Justice*

Now you may understand why there is such a virile, active faith in the hearts of so many good Christians today, in spite of what others may say about us. It is because we have not forgotten but are perpetuating the same faith as that of the early Christians when they began to practice so zealously the Beatitudes, especially the fourth. Call them Dark Ages if you will. St. Bonaventure says of such: "There are men who calumniate virtue, who call silence melancholy, gravity pride, the zeal of justice rash judgment, the repose and tranquillity of devotion laziness and indifference, mortification indiscretion, simplicity folly, the fear of God vain scruples, spiritual retreat the love of singularity, modesty hypocrisy. But remember this: To know the character of men, we do not inquire what they believe, or what they hope, but what they love." "Not," says Digby, "that they surpassed the ancient Romans in strength, or the Gauls in heroism, or the Greeks in arts, or the nations of modern Europe in provision for material interests of the temporal society, but that they surpassed all nations and people in piety and religion; and as the Roman philosopher says, 'in that one wisdom by which they perceived that all things are guided and governed by the providence of Almighty God.'"

*An Ideal for Us to Imitate*

This, then, is the meaning of the fourth Beatitude as the early Christians understood it, and as we understand it now. This is the zeal which Christ wished to instill into the hearts of the faithful at large who first heard Him in the Sermon on the Mount, and it is the same

fervor He desires in us when He tells us in the Beatitude, "Blessed is he that hungers and thirsts after justice, for he shall be satisfied." Therefore, in the words of St. Bonaventure, "We must hold the lance of zeal against the assault of vice, against the attacks of the devil, of the flesh, and of the world (power, pleasure and wealth). Of this lance we read in Jeremiah, 'It is with the lance of zeal that we must contend against evil.' If you do not hold out the lance of zeal against vice in this world, God will put forth the lance of his wrath against you in judgment. We must do this with the fervor of a Peter, the affection of a John, the sorrow of a Magdalene, the constancy of an Andrew." And St. Ambrose adds: "Behold the man free from quarrels, a true promotor of God, free from all evil, and persevering in his innocence." This is truly thirsting after justice.

And as for you and me, let us remember this: sanctity does not so much depend upon doing extraordinary actions as on doing our ordinary actions extraordinarily well. For most of us our life passes away in the ordinary actions which take up our time from morning till night. Now, if all these daily performances are done extraordinarily well, our whole time will be spent extraordinarily well, and nothing more will be required to make us worthy of the blessings of the fourth Beatitude, to make us saints. Neither will it cost us more to do them well than to do them ill; on the contrary, the better we perform them, and the more diligent and fervent we are in them, the more easy and delightful they become, and the grace of God and His blessing will go along with all we do. No miracles, no visions, no prophecies are necessary. Just our daily task faithfully fulfilled will satisfy our hunger and thirst for justice, give us peace and happiness

now and eternal peace and happiness at the end. Our way will lead . . .

*Through Peace to Light*

I do not ask, O Lord, that life may be  
A pleasant road;  
I do not ask that Thou wouldst take from me  
Aught of its load;  
I do not ask that flowers should always spring  
Beneath my feet;  
I know too well the poison and the sting  
Of things so sweet.  
For one thing only, Lord, dear Lord, I plead:  
Lead me aright,  
Though strength should falter, and though heart  
should bleed,  
Through peace to light.

I do not ask, O Lord, that Thou should'st shed  
Full radiance here;  
Give but a ray of peace, that I may tread  
Without fear.  
I do not ask my cross to understand,  
My way to see;  
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand  
And follow Thee.  
Joy is like restless day; but peace divine  
Like quiet night.  
Lead me, O Lord, till perfect day shall shine,  
Through peace to light.

# The Fifth Beatitude

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*

**W**HEN our divine Savior delivered His Sermon on the Mount He could not help but visualize man and society as they had gradually developed and were then constituted. For self protection, family groups had formed into associations of clans and tribes, of cities and nations. Eventually, for the good of civilization, it required the work and co-operation of many thousands of brains and hands. The general well-being and happiness made such a social life a necessity.

But then arose the difficulty of living peacefully and happily together. Human frailty and the inequalities between men soon became manifest. While all men are basically equal and have certain inalienable rights, by the very nature of things there are also countless inequalities; for example, the inequalities of physical endowment, of intellectual abilities, of social and economic status, of virtue, even of grace. And such unavoidable inequalities make for personality conflicts. The intelligent man, for



example, is bored by the ignorant; the strong is tempted to dominate the weaker; he who possesses certain virtues is inclined to severe judgment of those wanting in the same, though strong in others; the rich are not so inclined to stealing; the poor find it hard to be honest; intelligent and prudent men find intolerable the mistakes and rashness of the impulsive; the cold and passionless have no sympathy for the weaknesses of the passionate; the ailments of others are not our ailments; nor are the tastes of others our aspirations. And so each individual or group tends to become a little world of its own, one that opens up on other separate worlds, one that forces itself on our attention and cannot suffer to be ignored. And yet every man must somehow adjust his differences with others and, in spite of conflicts, must learn to co-operate and get along with the rest of society in general.

### *Before Christ Spoke*

Justice became the basis for rules and regulations to govern such groups and nations. But human laws based on justice soon proved inadequate. Human frailty quickly manifested itself. In the words of Epictetus, "No one who is a lover of riches, or a lover of pleasure, or a lover of glory, can be at the same time a lover of men." This is, particularly true with those in power, exercising authority over others. Even the chosen people of Israel grew greatly remiss in fulfilling the fundamental law of justice. The priests and doctors of the Law, who constituted the upper class, had little consideration for the proletariat. They were proud of their high places, their education, their wealth, and had little respect for those of inferior rank. And if justice was meted out it was only meant for friends.

The rule was, "Love your friends, but hate your enemies." The publicans and tax-gatherers, therefore, were scorned openly; the Roman conquerors were hated; all gentiles, and especially the Samaritans, were held in scorn because they were the offspring of marriages between Jews and gentiles. This barred the Samaritans from all commercial and religious intercourse with the Jews, who were forbidden even to give a cup of water to such. The gravity and intensity of ill will behind such restricted charity is strikingly described by St. Augustine. Before his conversion, as a Manichean, he used to give alms; but, he says, "had others who were not Manicheans appealed to me even for the wherewithal to appease their hunger, to have given them a mouthful would have seemed to me an act deserving of death."

### *Christ's Beatitude of Mercy*

It was clear, therefore, to the Savior that justice alone cannot govern the dealings of men. He understood man's limitations, his distortion of vision, his inability to read the hidden motives of the heart. Hence He proclaimed a new principle of social life, with His own personal reward attached, by declaring that "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Newman defined a gentleman as one who never inflicts pain. But mercy is more positive than that. It is a virtue disposing the will to pity and relieve the misery of others. It is a compassionate understanding of another's unhappiness. Mercy means clemency, forbearance, forgiveness, indulgence, tolerance, leniency, and protection when dealing with others. It is all this because we see in our fellow man the image of God. And what we do for our neighbor, we do for God.

Furthermore, it is not a mere passive mental feeling of pity, but an active sympathy, an active resolve to relieve others of sorrow and misery as if they were our own. Again, this misery of my neighbor may be either physical or spiritual, but it matters not which it be; both corporal and spiritual works of mercy are intended to relieve pain and suffering and to overcome and correct sin and wrongdoing without distinction of race, color, or creed.

### *Christ the Model of Mercy*

Christ's Beatitude of mercy illumines the New Testament and mitigates the rigors of the Old. And if one word could sum up the life of our Lord, I think that one word would be "merciful"; for the Psalmist tells us that "the tender mercies of the Lord are above all His works," and that "as a father has compassion on his children, so has the Lord compassion on them that fear him." And His own Blessed Mother has proclaimed it to the world in her Magnificat: "For generation upon generation is his mercy, to those who fear him."

"I have compassion on the crowd," are words we repeatedly meet in the life-story of the Savior. He seemed never to tire of going about doing good; that was His whole life. The Gospels are mainly the story of Christ's infinite kindness and mercy—both corporal and spiritual works of mercy—the healing of the sick, the pardoning of sinners, the raising of the dead. No less than six of our Lord's parables deal with the merciful treatment and forgiveness of one's neighbor. They are the parable of the two debtors (*Luke*, vii, 40-43); of the mote and the beam (*Matt.* vii, 3-5); of the unmerciful servant (*Matt.* xviii, 23-35); of the lost sheep (*Luke*, xv, 4-7; *Matt.* xviii, 12-14);

of the prodigal son (*Luke*, xv, 11-32); and especially that of the Good Samaritan (*Luke* x, 30-37), where the wily lawyer had to admit publicly that even a Samaritan (whom the Jews hated) fulfilled the law of mercy. And all these parables taught but one lesson, namely, that the whole world is our neighbor, that there is no distinction between Jew and gentile.

All of Christ's miracles were intended to prove that He was the Messiah and that His teachings were divine, but some seemed to have been performed out of pure mercy. Many were never recorded, but one such miracle of mercy was that at the wedding feast of Cana, performed in response to the plea of His mother, who wanted to spare the embarrassment of the young married couple. She was even then the Comforter of the Afflicted and Mother of Mercy and has remained so ever since. In all her apparitions at the grotto of Lourdes, the Blessed Virgin spoke only of mercy. During those eighteen apparitions only one cloud of sadness passed over her brow, and it passed quickly. She then wept over the lot of so many thousands of souls which daily fall into perdition. Apart from this moment of sadness, her face wore a continual smile.

### *A Church of Mercy*

Christ has also made mercy the very soul of His Church. From the very beginning the apostles, and indeed all the members of the infant Church, began to imitate the mercy of Jesus and Mary. He had said to them, "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another." They were devoted to the poor and collected alms for their relief. In the *Acts* we read that "the disciples, each according to his means, determined to send

relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. And this they did, sending it to the presbyters by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

The Church has always looked after those who needed her mercy. So did Sir Launfal search for the Holy Grail, the cup out of which Christ drank with His disciples at the Last Supper. The poet tells us that Sir Launfal spent his whole life in sacred pilgrimage, wandering from place to place, looking for the precious chalice. After a long and fruitless search, when returning, old, weary, worn, and possessing only a crust of bread, he meets a leper, almost starved, who begs an alms for Christ's sweet sake. Sir Launfal shares with him his last crust and brings him water from the stream. Then suddenly the leper is not a leper, but Christ Himself, and the cup is changed into the Holy Grail. In showing mercy to the poor man, Sir Launfal had found what he had so ardently and vainly sought and he realized then that

Whoever helps a friend, helps three:  
He helps himself, his friend, and Me.

### *Corporal Works of Mercy*

This mission of mercy the Church has carried on down through the centuries. For example, it is said of St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, that "No widow returned from him with an empty lap; no blind man was unguided by him as a companion; none faltering in step was unsupported by him for a staff; none stripped of help by the hand of the mighty was not protected by him as a defender." His instructions were: "I request that you will diligently take care of the widows and of the sick and of



all the poor." Digby again tells us that "this has ever been the spirit of our holy religion, wherever lips have been trained from childhood to kiss the crucifix. A whole world of vengeful and cruel tragedy has been annihilated in the human heart, and a new creation effected there. What more new to it than mercy to the foe in war, mercy to the criminal in presence of judicial power, mercy to the wretched agent of inhuman wrong—holy mercy, exceptionless, dictating love to the foe, compassion to the guilty, and forgiveness to the oppressor."

"There was nothing in the Christian discipline which forbade men to be rich," says St. Clement of Alexandria, "but they were only forbidden to be rich unjustly and immeasurably." And St. Justin Martyr, in his *Apology*, shows us how the early Christians acted towards the poor. "And they who are well-to-do and willing give what each thinks fit, and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word, takes care of all who are in need." Indeed, in the old days, much like in Ireland to-day, every stranger was treated as if he were a wandering Christ. The monasteries, especially, treated strangers in this way. Besides being seats of learning, they were also abodes of mercy, and the monks were the best friends of the poor, where not only the aged and the helpless, the widows and orphans were cared for, but where also agriculture and trades were taught to the people.

We are so accustomed to charitable activities and institutions of every kind that it is hard for us to conceive of a time when there were no such organizations. The Blanshards and the Oxnamms may speak of the Dark Ages

disparagingly, but the truth of the matter is that they were the Ages of Faith and of Mercy. Who, for example, thought of the slaves in those days? The slave was a mere beast, so cheap that Seneca alone had 20,000 of them, that even poisons were tried out on them. But soon multitudes of them received their liberty from Christian families, some being purchased from their owners and set free. St. Peter Claver devoted more than forty years of his life to the care of slaves. His headquarters was at Cartagena, the great slave-mart of the West Indies. He called himself "the slave of the slaves." He was their apostle, father, physician, and friend. He fed them, nursed them with the utmost tenderness in their loathsome diseases, often applying his own lips to their hideous and festering sores. His cloak, which was the constant covering of the naked, though soiled with their filthy ulcers, sent forth a miraculous perfume. He would meet every vessel that entered the harbor with its cargo of slaves. His rest after his labors was in nights of penance and prayer. It is estimated that he baptized 40,000 Negroes before he went to his reward.

Let us consider the hospitals as we know them now. The ancient world did not even have a word for such an institution. It was only in the fourth century that Christianity was obliged to coin a word to fit what paganism never dreamed of. It was St. Camillus of Lillis, the son of an Italian nobleman, who perfected the method of treating the sick as we find it in all reputable hospitals today. While lying sick in the hospital of St. Giacomo in Rome, he observed the carelessness of the nurses towards the suffering patients. This inspired him with the thought of founding a congregation to minister to their wants. He named it "The Servants of the Sick." He himself did

the most menial tasks for the patients with a woman's tenderness. He wept with them, consoled them, and prayed with them. "Would to God," he would cry, "that in the hour of my death one sign or one blessing of these poor creatures might fall upon me!" He died with the full use of his faculties while the priest was reciting the words: "May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and joyful countenance."

To carry on this ever expanding work of mercy the Church would rely, as she does now, upon the generosity of the faithful. That is why in Rome in the year 250, where there were but 50,000 Christians constituting one-twentieth of the population, such offerings supported 1,500 widows, sick, and poor. And St. Charles Borromeo at a later date, during the famine in Milan, fed over 3,000 at his own expense, while he himself lived on bread and water. And hospitals, houses of refuge were multiplied by him, and during the plague he daily fed between 60,000 and 70,000 needy, and sold everything he owned in order to buy food for the hungry.

Down through the ages there have been many like St. Martin, cutting their cloaks in two for a beggar; like St. Vincent de Paul for every kind of affliction; like St. Catherine for the lepers and plague-stricken; all of them performing the works of mercy, giving food and drink and clothes to the needy, money to redeem the prisoner or slave, shelter to those who did not have a roof, kindness to the sick. And everywhere these duties were performed as a part of daily Catholic life. Thus St. Thomas of Canterbury knelt every day before thirteen beggars, washed their feet, and then gave every one four pieces of silver. St. Hedwige, Queen of Poland, was another who fed thirteen beggars and took them with her wherever she went.

The same was true in regards to the spiritual works of mercy, namely, admonishing the sinner, instructing the ignorant, counselling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful, preaching and practicing the patient endurance of injustice, the forgiveness of others, and praying for the living and the dead—every possible manifestation of mercy and charity being a part of Christian training and practice.

### *Religious Orders of Mercy*

Where this could not be done individually, men and women would gather in groups and form religious communities. Jeanne Jugan, a poor servant woman founded the Little Sisters of the Poor in a tiny attic. In 100 years these Sisters of the Poor have spread all over the world, actually covering the earth with their mantle of mercy. Another is Frederick Ozanam who organized the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He, with his companions, "eight poor fellows," humbly started a movement to aid the poor that changed the face of the earth. When his enemies taunted him, saying, "Show us your works," he began to do something about it. It was decided that their work should be the service of God in the persons of the poor, by corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Soon they were visiting 20,000 poor people, giving their own money, their clothes, and collecting alms. Ozanam never refused to speak to assemblies of workingmen, as careful in preparing his talks for them as when preparing his lectures at the Sorbonne. "Do away with misery," he would say, "Christianize the people and you will make an end of revolution."

Father Matthew, the great apostle of temperance, who also greatly aided the poor of Ireland, used this slogan as

he set out upon his apostolic work: "Here goes, in the name of God." And, in effect, that has always been the slogan of every Christian who set out on his mission of mercy, always mindful of the Lord's promise in the Beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

For this reason, multitudes of men and women have left home and fireside, kindred and friends, and sacrificed all the joys and comforts of life to minister to the needy. They teach in our schools and colleges; they nurse the sick and care for the aged and the orphans. Institutions like our Good Shepherd Convents have found the answer for our problem girls. Father Flanagan's Boys' Town has solved the problem of our boys. Every Christian community has its welfare centers for local needs in the home and with families. Our service men and women in World War II found these self-sacrificing missionaries in the far reaches of the Pacific, spreading the Gospel of Mercy in pagan lands. And many of our service men and women during that war are grateful to these missionaries for saving their lives by preparing the natives to receive them as friends when they landed on distant shores. We are so accustomed to all this that we seldom think how extraordinary it is in comparison to earlier days. What a dreary world this would be if these Angels of Mercy had not hearkened to the Sermon on the Mount! They have, indeed, answered the taunters and showed the world their works.

And speaking of war, we have the American Bishops' report on the Emergency Relief Committee and War Relief Services of the National Welfare Conference. Our goal for the year 1952 was \$5,000,000. In 1951 this relief agency distributed supplies weighing 76,757,786 pounds



and valued at \$21,873,320 for distribution in 36 war ravaged countries. And the Bishops' Fund agencies have been responsible for bringing a total of 114,072 displaced persons to the U.S.A. to begin life anew after appalling sufferings in the wake of war. "In this world pageant of mercy," says Pope Pius XII, "it is the duty of all as far as possible to mitigate the distress, to sweeten the sorrow, and to relieve the anguish of their brethren. Charity, indeed, can remedy to a certain extent many unjust social conditions. But that is not enough, for in the first place there must be justice which should prevail."

But until then, "mercy is that smiling daughter of heaven who makes no distinction among God's children. She is the first one to have said, 'All men are created equal.' She does not turn her face away even from the foulest, blackest and most despicable wretch who seeks her favor. Like the gentle breeze that kisses the cheeks of the poorest traveler as readily as the richest, so mercy is free for all who will open their arms to embrace her. Mercy is like the light that shines into the cell of the condemned criminal as well as into the sacred room of the devout Christian. The harlot, as well as the saint, who knocks at her door, receives a smiling welcome. She clasps every hand that is stretched out to her; she has her ear always open to hear those musical words, 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'"

### *Mercy For Mercy, Our Reward*

And for all this! For mercy, God's mercy flows freely in return. For, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Whoever helps a friend, helps three:  
He helps himself, his friend, and Me.

So, St. Luke tells us: "Be ye merciful as your Father also is merciful. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they pour into your lap. For with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you."

. . . Onward thou shalt go,  
Bearing thy own and cheering others' woe;  
Treading the path where guiding angels lead,  
And scattering on thy way the priceless seed  
Which, sown in tears, is harvested in joy.

## The Sixth Beatitude

*"Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."*

**WE** HAVE now reached the third stage or grouping of the Eight Beatitudes. As we said before, every subsequent Beatitude carries us one step further in the spiritual life, always in a progressive ascent to a life of spiritual perfection. The first three Beatitudes cover the passive or purgative period. Counteracting the evils of wealth, pleasure, and power, we have poverty of spirit; for pride and vain-glory, we have meekness and humility; for avarice and revenge, we have mourning and pity for the sufferings of others.

The next two Beatitudes bring us to the active or positive stage as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is Christian action. They counteract injustice with justice, selfishness and abuse of power with mercy and charity. The sixth and seventh Beatitudes cover the Evangelical Counsels and bring us into the unitative stage with God Himself with His own personal promise of a reward now and finally eternal glory forever

in company with the angels and saints in heaven. According to St. Thomas, the preceding five Beatitudes dispose us for the acquisition of happiness in this life, while the two that follow contain within themselves the very essence of happiness; the sixth perfects the individual and makes him fit for unity with God, while the seventh makes the individual perfect in relation with his neighbor and fellowman. We shall now proceed with the sixth Beatitude in which our Lord declares, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

### *Its Importance*

The correct understanding of this Beatitude is of vital importance to every one of us. For the proper guidance of disturbed minds and hearts, every doctor, every physician, every psychiatrist, every teacher and director of souls should have a full and comprehensive understanding of the sixth Beatitude, because, as one old missionary once remarked, "most people do their thinking from their necks on down instead of from their necks on up." In other words, man forgets to use his reason, intellect, and will properly in trying to solve the many complex problems of life. This is true ever since man fell from grace through his disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Adam, after sinning, hid from God and clothed his nakedness. Hence modern society, as undoubtedly the society of nearly every age, is sensitive and concerned about appearances, impressions, much more than it is about reality. It is as if all that mattered in man were his dress, his polish, or his wit, as if the hair-do changed the heart of a woman or spring-styles told of her character. We are prone to ask if man has knowledge, breeding, or pr

not if he has virtue. The enormity of sin does not seem to be so revolting if it approaches us well-groomed, well-dressed.

Always, of course, hypocrisy has worn the aspect of a saint. Disloyalty has succeeded in speaking fair words. Shame has won notorious fame. At the bottom of all is man's vain-glory and pride, the two capital enemies of purity of heart and purity of intention. And the difference between the two is this: Vain-glory consists in loving and desiring to be esteemed by others, whereas pride consists in a vain esteem of one's self; vain-glory makes persons turn their eyes upon what others may say or think of their words and actions; it makes them perfect idolaters of a point of honor, of the esteem, reputation, and approbation of the world. But pride makes them self-sufficient, turning their eyes upon their own excellence, comparing their performance with that of others, esteeming their own as far superior, and taking a secret complacency in themselves and in all they do. This hypocrisy, this vain-glory, this pride so prevelant in the world makes man prefer himself to God and his neighbor. Our Lord said of them: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. . . . For out of the heart come evil thoughts, adulteries, immorality, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man."

### *Its All-Inclusiveness*

Man sees the face, God sees the heart. The heart of man, his mind and will, his secret intentions, are what count with God. Therefore, we declare that the sixth Beatitude is the keystone of all happiness, of all the other Beatitudes, because it is all-inclusive. For "purity of



heart" means more than mere chastity or modesty; it means a way of life according to right reason. It includes all virtue, the entire Sermon on the Mount, and the entire Decalogue. That is why most scholastic commentators declare that this Beatitude is justly placed in the sixth degree of spiritual perfection, since on the sixth day man was created in the image and likeness of God, which image was obscured by sinful blot but is now purged by grace. And just as purity of heart implies the possession of the other precious seeds of blessed life, the same "purity of heart" is no less necessarily included in each of them. For, says St. Ambrose, citing one instance as sufficient proof, "he who shows mercy loses the fruit of mercy unless he be merciful with a clean heart; for if he seek boasting, there is no fruit from his mercy."

That is why Digby, when speaking of this Beatitude, declares: "This path now before us leads still higher than any which we hitherto have followed, and yet it will not separate us from the essential to all studies that have historical knowledge; within certain limits, for their end. Whence, without accurate observation here, many things which are presented must remain inexplicable in the history of the world. For, whether the question relates to a Charlemagne founding monasteries and presiding over the Christian world; to an Edward the Confessor legislating; to a Godfrey mounting the throne of Jerusalem; to a St. Louis hastening to the relief of the Holy Land; to a Ferdinand recovering Spain from the Mohamedans; to a Gregory VII enforcing the ecclesiastical discipline; to an Innocent III according to nations which turned to him with one voice for protection from the violence of despotic power, the protection of the Holy See; to a Thomas of Canterbury dying for the freedom of the Church; to a

Bernard directing the counsels of princes; to a Boniface, a Patrick, or an Augustine departing to convert heathen nations; to a Bruno retiring into the desert; to a Dunstan substituting monks for seculars; to a Francis embracing poverty; to a Dominick opposing heresy; to a Gercino painting for altars; to a count of Anjou building churches; or only to a duke of Aquitaine taking up his pilgrim's staff—there will arise problems that admit of no solution if we do not take into account the conviction and the doctrine, which prevailed universally during those ages, respecting the Beatitudes of the 'clean of heart.' "

### *Meaning of Purity of Heart*

And what was the motive of all these historical characters enumerated by Digby? In the words of St. Thomas: "Every good of the body has been ordained for the good of the soul as an end." "This purity of heart," says St. Bernard, "consists in two things, in seeking the glory of God and the utility of our neighbor. And for the rational power to be clean, it should abstain from three things, namely, from duplicity of intention, falsity of opinion, and hurtful operation. And for the irascible power to be pure, it should be clean from the fear that causes an evil humiliation; for this leads fallen man to idolatry, astrology, sortilege, and other superstitions which horribly stain the human heart."

What, then, makes clean the heart of man? In the words of Albert the Great: "The image of God in the soul, which consists in these three powers—reason, memory and will; and so long as these are not wholly impressed by God, the soul is not deiform according to its primary creation; for

God is the form of the soul by whom it ought to be impressed as if wax by a seal, and stamped as if stamped by a seal; and this cannot be effected unless reason be perfectly, as far as its capacity permits, illuminated with the knowledge of God, which is the highest truth, and the will be perfectly affected to loving the highest goodness, and the memory be fully absorbed in contemplating and enjoying eternal felicity." Therefore, in his *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis says, "With two wings is man raised above the earth, namely, simplicity and purity; simplicity in the intention, purity in the affection; simplicity intending God, purity apprehending and tasting him." And this is the key that unlocks the secrets of the Ages of Faith in the past, and it remains the key for the proper solution of things today. For when the heart is pure, all goods of the body, all important institutions, all offices, all combinations of intellectual and material things that receive the highest sanction are ordained to cleanliness of heart as to their proper end. It affects the interior disposition of men and shapes the course of human events, the institutions and manners of society.

### *Human Passions Not Necessarily Evil*

But what about our many passions which so greatly disturb the lives of most people? Let us approach this question sanely and calmly. And lest my personal opinion might be questioned, I shall give you the opinions of those who are universally recognized as authorities on the subject. St. Thomas, who was humanly passionate, the same as we, gives us the correct answer. "Passions," he says, "when consequent to reason, are good; they exer-

cise a twofold influence, by redundancy, and by elections; that is to say, when the superior part of the soul is intensely moved towards something, the inferior part also follows its motion, and thus the passion existing in the sensitive appetite is consequently a sign of the intensity of the will and indicates a greater moral goodness. In another manner also they are by way of election; that is, when a man chooses with the judgment of reason to be affected by some passion, that he may work more promptly by the co-operation of the sensitive appetite; and thus the passion of the soul adds to the goodness of the action."

Regarding the state of original innocence, St. Thomas continues: "Not that purity was passionless, as some say; for all sensible delight was so much the greater, as nature was purer and more susceptible; but the state of innocence did not exclude delight, but only the tyranny of sense and sin-bred disquietude of mind; and therefore in that state continence was not laudable, where there was fecundity without sin." Or, in the words of St. Augustine who had experienced all the delights of unbridled passion, "Original rectitude consisted in perfect subjection of body to the mind." And our contention is that, at least to some degree, this subjection can be re-established by maintaining the rational faculty in subjection to God, the eternal reason. Therefore, Hugo of St. Victor declares that passions should be directed, not extirpated, for "there is a certain medium to which the body ascends that it may approach to spirit; and again, to which the spirit descends that it may approach to body. Unless Moses had ascended, and God descended, they would not have met. Thus the spirit also ascends, and God descends, in the same manner as the body ascends and the spirit descends. The body

ascends by sense, the spirit descends by sensuality. The spirit ascends by contemplation, and God descends by revelation." Therefore, in the words of St. Bernard: "As we are carnal, our desires and our lives must commence by the flesh; and if this flesh be well regulated, if it be contained in order, perfecting itself by degrees under the guidance of grace, it will finally owe to the spirit the complement of its perfection. It is not that which is spiritual which goes in the first line, but that which is animal. We must first bear the resemblance of the earthly man before we bear that of the heavenly man."

### *Good Passions Motivated*

Therefore, I repeat, purity of heart consists in two things, in seeking God's glory and in the utility of our neighbor. These are the motivating powers that should govern all the faculties of mind and body, including our lower appetites and passions. "It is necessary at first," says St. Augustine, "by reasoning or thinking, intellectually to know before any thing can be loved with affection." Again, Hugo of St. Victor says, "Many things we love from the choice of deliberation which we do not affect with the appetite of desire. In carnal desires, love from the mind often follows love from the heart; but spiritually we always love first from deliberation, and afterwards from affection." Therefore, passion is predicated upon love, and love upon reason, and reason tells us that the greatest Lover of all times is the Word Incarnate, our Savior and Redeemer, Who, as Scripture tells us "we should love because He first loved us." And if my passions are thus motivated, they become a holy thing.



*The Horizon Widens*

Furthermore, passions governed by purity of intention and based upon love naturally tend to communicate themselves to others, for love is naturally diffusive. And since the God of Love is also the Creator of heaven and earth and all creatures, man has a tendency to widen his horizon of affection and share it with his fellow-creatures. That is why the saints could see God and His love in everything they did and associated with: St. Francis with the animals and the birds, the water in the brook and the plants by the wayside; St. Aloysius Gonzaga governing all his actions by the one question: "How does this look in the light of eternity?" and St. Stanislaus stating simply, "I was made for higher things." The same is true of all artists, and craftsmen. Murillo's picture of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin inspired the poet Trench, when he saw it, to exclaim:

What innocence, what love, what loveliness,  
What purity must have familiar been  
Unto the soul, before it could express  
The holy beauty in that visage seen!

Such men painted as they lived. Brother Angelico, for example, when called by Pope Eugene IV to paint in the Vatican, first left the world and joined a religious community. He is noted for the life history of Sts. Lawrence and Stephen. It is said he never painted a crucifixion group without shedding many tears and that he painted on his knees. In the words of Buffalmacco, another artist, "our sole business is to make saints, holy men, and holy women, on walls and over altars, in order that by their means, men, to the great despite of demons, may be more

disposed to piety and virtue." Here we have various ways by which we can exercise purity of heart towards God through His creatures and see God in everything. In the words of Louis of Blois, "If God would say: enjoy every imaginable delight (here enumerate any amount you wish) and God would say you may do so, but you shall never see my face, our answer would be: Take all these away, but do not deny me the blessing of seeing Your face to face."

*Purity of Heart and Love of Neighbor*

From God and His creatures, let us turn momentarily towards our neighbors and our love towards them, for upon them also is purity of heart predicated. And our neighbors, composed of bodies and rational souls, are much superior to all God's other creatures. Therefore, they merit a reverence far superior to that which we manifest towards any non-rational creature. For men and women are creatures of God, whose bodies have been sanctified and redeemed through the God of love, and through grace and the Sacraments have become co-members with us in the Mystical Body of Christ. In order to procure and preserve purity of heart between neighbor and neighbor, God in His divine wisdom has instituted two avenues of escape from the passions and selfishness of the flesh. They are the Sacrament of matrimony and the vow of chastity. Both make possible a greater and wider field of service.

Matrimony merges individuals into a corporate life in which neither lives for self but for the other. It crushes selfishness because the very permanence of marriage is alien to those fleeting infatuations which are born with the moment and die with it. And since love is by nature

diffusive, mutual love of husband and wife takes them out of themselves into the incarnation of their mutual love, their other selves, their children. The rearing of their children calls for mutual sacrifices without which, like unwanted flowers, they wilt and die. And as the family grows new horizons and new vistas of devotion and mutual sacrifices open up until all flesh is placed upon the altar of sacrifice that others may live. And that is the beginning of perpetual love, eternal love.

### *Passions Solely for God*

God has provided still another escape from the selfishness of flesh, one more complete than the Sacrament of matrimony. This is the life of chastity acknowledged by God and sealed by the Church. The man or woman who takes this vow does so, not to escape the sacrifices which marriage demands (as some contend), but to detach himself from all the ties of the flesh in order to be free to give all to God and his fellowman. And this vow is a higher form of sacrifice than matrimony because it purchases a greater release from the claims of the flesh, for the greater the purity the less the selfishness. It embraces not a mutual bond between one man and one woman and a few children, but he who chooses absolute chastity embraces all men and all women and all children in the bonds of charity in the Mystical Body of Christ. Such embrace the world and humanity as a whole. That is why in that larger family of the Kingdom of God, the priest is called "Father," because he has begotten children not in the flesh, but in the spirit. That is why the superior of a religious community of women is called "Mother," because she has her little flock in Christ. That, too, is why

certain teaching orders of men are called "Brothers," and why women in religious life are called "Sisters." And all together they constitute one universal family in which new relations have been established, not by their birth in the flesh, but by their birth in Christ. All are now selflessly seeking the glory of God and the salvation of sinners under the one whom they love most on earth, their Holy Father, the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Truly, to such in particular Christ has promised a reward a hundredfold. However, to one and all, whether in the religious, the married, or in any other state, Christ has said: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

### *The Battle Continues*

But there was another picture of the world which Christ perceived as He spoke from the Mount of Beatitudes. It is a world steeped in pride and presumption which holds sway in the hearts and minds of men, where uncontrolled passions and lust remain supreme, where vain-glory, debauchery, pleasure, and full satisfaction of the senses are proclaimed the supreme height of happiness. Of such, the Book of Proverbs tells us that "a perverse heart is abominable to the Law."

Jesus called them hypocrites and whited sepulchres. He called them blind leaders of the blind. He spoke to them in parables of the man who sells his all in order to buy the pearl of great price, the parable of the tree and its fruits, the parable of the rich man, the parable of the thief in the night, the parable of the faithful servant, the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins, and the parable of the talents. All were reminded through these parables of the words of Isaias, the prophet, saying, "Forasmuch

as this people draw near me with their mouth and with their lips glorify me, but their heart is far from me."

Again, from the Mount of Beatitudes Jesus could see beyond Israel into a pagan world which was morally corrupt, where Greece and Rome glorified abnormal vices, where Jupiter and Venus and Aphrodite and other gods and goddesses wallowed in lust. Christ could look into the far distant future, to our own times, when the same pagan principles would prevail in the hearts and minds of many, when innocence and purity of heart are in low repute and looked upon with scorn and ridicule, where innocence has become a byword for ignorance and inexperience. For normal people, the modern pagan claims, loss of innocence follows upon physical maturity, and therefore the innocent must be classified as oddities. They see no need for a youth to be chaste provided he is not diseased. They see little difference between fidelity and infidelity inside or outside of married life, because the interest of the individual means more to them than that of society in general. They make pretensions to being scientific. They prate about liberty and freedom, saying, "Everyone has the right to live his own life"; "Love has the right to be free"; "Fidelity is hypocrisy when love has gone." To all such we need but to reply in the words of Holy Writ that "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and it is they that defile a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, immorality. These are the things that defile a man." And all this is nothing more than a bold frontal attack which the moderns are making on the Christian concept of purity and decency.



*A Momentous Matter of Choice*

Hence the issue is a question between the Christian and pagan, the old and the new morality. Which shall rule? Shall the soul rule a bridled body, or the body rule a soul enslaved? If the latter should prevail then history will again repeat itself. Martin Luther tried it in his day and confessed later that the self-styled emancipation of the human mind from true religious principles nullify the ideals of purity. Before his death he saw the dyke of evil he had opened wide with his doctrine of free license of the passions. "If I had known," he wrote then, "at first that men were so much the enemies of the word of God, I should certainly have remained silent and tranquil. I imagined that they only sinned through ignorance. The world is like a drunken peasant; if you put it in the saddle right on one side, it falls down on the other. There is no helping it, do what one will. The world chooses to belong to Satan. God forbid the world should last 50 years longer! Many sects will arise which are now hidden in the hearts of men. Let the Lord cut matters short with the last judgment, for there is no amelioration to expect. The time is come that was predicted, when men would live without God, each according to his fantasy. Our people, now that they are free from the laws of the pope, wish to be free also from the laws of God."

Thus spoke Luther in his declining years. Such was the result of breaking up the ancient spiritual order of faith, directing the energies of ungovernable men to attack the only force that could restrain the passions and subject the affections of the human heart to the ideal of Christian decency. But, says the poet Trench,

The irreversible decree stands sure,  
Where men are selfish, covetous of gain,  
Heady and fierce, unholy and impure,  
Their toil is lost, and fruitless all their pain,  
They cannot build a work which shall endure.

*The Fruits of this Beatitude*

Now let us turn to the other side of the picture and see whether Christ's message contained in the sixth Beatitude has been entirely useless. Everyone, be he Christian, pagan or Jew, even though he has not always practiced purity of spirit in his own life, has always respected it and admired it in others. Even pagan Rome had its vestal virgins who were paid special respect and consideration. And Petrarch could write for all posterity: "I bless the happy moment that directed my heart to Laura. She led me to see the path of virtue, to detach my heart from base and grovelling objects; from her I am inspired with that celestial flame which raises my soul to heaven, and directs it to the Supreme Cause, as the only source of happiness." Years later, the ruthless Iron Chancellor, Bismarck of Germany, while speaking of marital fidelity, could write this to his wife: "God knows that, since I married you, there are only two that I loved: God and you." And in more recent years, another Christian statesman penned the following:

Dear one, you gave me all your heart;  
I gave you all of mine;  
And, as the fleeting seasons went,  
We daily took Love's Sacrament,  
Which God has made divine.

*It Can Be Done*

We do admit that the cards seem to be stacked against us now when every possible means of propaganda and publicity apparently favors impurity and tries to make it appear pleasing and palatable to the clean of heart. How intolerable it must seem to a pagan world to find Christians still practicing the virtue of purity, men and women who refuse to act as other Romans, as other Greeks, as other barbarians. Can sane men and women treat so indifferently our modern culture inherited from Greece and Rome? Yes, many millions still emulate their early Christian forbearers. Letters, edicts, rescripts were issued from the palace of the Emperor; martyrdom, tolerance, aloofness, persuasion were employed then as now. But with all, Christians remained obedient to the will of God. They remained citizens of the Empire, loyal and obedient to authority, except when that authority turned irreligious. Then arose young maidens like Caecilia, Agatha, Lucy and numerous others who welcomed martyrdom rather than sacrifice their virginity and purity. St. Cyprian, himself a convert, bishop, and martyr, said of such: "Virginity is the continuance of infancy. . . . The Church, crowned with so many virgins, flourishes, and chastity and modesty preserve the tenor of their glory." Yes, the pure of heart will see God, as a child sees God, as the pure angels see God, and for that reason it is called the angelic virtue. They knew about Mary, the Mother Most Pure, their model and protectress. They knew about John, the disciple whom Jesus loved on account of his purity. Besides, Christians always have Christ in the Eucharist to nourish their souls and prayer and the other Sacraments to supply the fortifying graces to sustain them.

*Always A Struggle*

We do not deny that self-mastery always entails a struggle. But St. Paul as well as St. Augustine can testify that self-mastery does not endanger physical or mental health, as some contend. Danger does arise from firing and stimulating the imagination with visions which give the spirit no rest. Both Paul and Augustine were passionate men; both, however, conquered self. The one prayed to God for relief, and God answered saying, "My grace is sufficient for you." And purity of heart made the proud and passionate Saul into an humble and obedient Paul who from then on never tired of preaching Christ and Him crucified. St. Augustine, too, was in veritable agony on account of his unruly passions. Then came the day when he heard the voice of a little child chanting, "Take and read, take and read." He opened the Epistles of St. Paul and read: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof." Augustine could only ask, "If these men and women have done it, why not I?" At last he had found the remedy to conquer his perverse will and sinful lust through will power and determination, through prayer and grace.

*Purity's Appeal*

Once correctly understood, history records the wonderful appeal purity has to the hearts of Christians. Recall, for example, that in the very first days of Ireland's conversion, at least a tenth of all its men and women were vowed to God in virginity. All the world knows the story

of St. Francis of Assissi. So appealing were his words on "purity of spirit" in serving the Master, that many offered to leave their families and join his community of religious. But he advised them to return to their homes, to their husbands and wives, and there create little cells where the purity of spirit would activate their very lives. The result was the Third Order of St. Francis with an army of about 5,000,000 strong today, men and women, married and single, unassumingly heeding the words to "be clean of heart" in their daily lives, in homes, farms, factories, shops and offices. And so it is as it should be. For Christ did not intend the sixth Beatitude merely for the religious in cloister or monastery; He meant it for men and women in every walk of life. It is the assertion of His claim to the body and soul of every man and woman that all should remain pure in spirit, and that at the end all should see God.

Therefore, Pascal gave good advice when he said: "If you wish to be convinced of eternal truths, do not augment your arguments, but weed out your passions." It is not true that purity is a negation, a frustration of life or the fullness of our being. On the contrary, purity of heart is a positive thing and enables us to attain fullness of life. For life in full freedom can only be tasted and enjoyed by those whose spirit "can ascend the mountain of the Lord and stand in His holy place: the innocent in hands and clean of heart." Yes, purity is the radio-beam which directs the flight of the soul to God.

It was said of King Arthur's knights that "their strength was as the strength of ten because their hearts were pure." Remain pure and chaste and you will be beloved by God and man. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory," exclaims the author of the Book of Wisdom, "for

the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it has withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts."

And a conflict it will be to the end. Temptations against this virtue have assailed us and they will continue to assail us until life's last breath. But when attacks do come, let us say with the saintly youths, St. Stanislaus and Aloysius: "I was made for higher things"; "How does this look in the light of eternity." Then continue to keep your eyes centered on the Hill of Calvary through all the gloom, and suddenly before you are aware of it you will see the Easter Dawn and know that you are looking straight into the pure eyes of a loving Savior Who has promised that because of your cleanness of heart you shall see God.

### *Peace With Jesus*

My loving Savior! ah, what depth of love  
Hath made Thee leave Thy heavenly throne above  
And come to visit me, to be my food,  
To make my sinful body Thy abode;  
To shield me from the world, to make me pure,  
To give me strength, with patience to endure.  
Ah, let me with a burning soul draw near,  
And fondly, with St. John, without a fear,  
Lean my poor head upon Thy loving breast,  
And in Thy sacred arms serenely rest,  
Depart, each earthly care, each worldly smile;  
Leave me alone with Jesus for a while.

Sweet Jesus! by this sacrament of love  
All gross affections from my heart remove;  
Let but Thy loving kindness linger there,  
Preserved by grace and perfected by prayer;



And let me to my neighbor strive to be  
As mild and gentle as Thou art with me.  
Take Thou the guidance of my whole career,  
That to displease Thee be my only fear;  
Give me that peace the world can never give,  
And in Thy loving presence let me live.  
Ah! show me always, Lord, Thy holy will  
And to each troubled thought say, "Peace, be still."

## The Seventh Beatitude

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."*

**T**HIS and the preceding Beatitude might well be called twin sisters. The one is predicated upon the other and follows in natural sequence. Both begin with God as the basis from which we draw our happiness. The sixth Beatitude promises peace and happiness for myself through purity of heart and purity of intention in all that I do. The seventh Beatitude extends this happiness to my neighbor, and thus I become a peacemaker for others. This holy triangle, God, neighbor and myself, is much like a highly refined timepiece. When all its complicated mechanism is well meshed and synchronized it becomes a precision instrument, a perfect time-piece. In a similar manner, when we have purity of intention in all we do, when all is focused upon God, we bring happiness to ourselves and peace to others. In this light we now begin the consideration of the seventh Beatitude.

*Peace as the World Sees It*

Many people have never enjoyed true peace of heart and mind, because they have failed to seek it where it can be found. When World War II was drawing to a close and victory seemed ours, Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill to discuss a possible armistice and terms of peace. When the name of Pope Pius XII, the representative of the Prince of Peace, was mentioned as a participant in formulating the terms for peace, it is reported that Stalin remarked: "How many divisions has the Pope got?" In other words, how many divisions did the Pope give us to win the war, and how many can he furnish to preserve the peace? The question of morality, right and justice never entered Stalin's mind. But, like all dictators of the past, he knows but one form of morality, one formula for peace, which is that might makes right. Never before in the history of the world have we heard of a political system like communism, based on the principle of hate, determined to still the voice of the Prince of Peace, demanding peace on its own terms. Communism has promised freedom—freedom to work as slaves of the state or starve, but it has failed to bring its subjugated people and the world liberty, happiness, or peace.

*Man Slow to Learn From History*

In the history of mankind many mighty armies have gone to war and have come back victorious. They may have fought to protect or vindicate the rights of peoples and nations, but never has war procured for any nation a lasting peace. We have fought two World Wars in the last fifty years, and each time we failed to win the peace. The

first battle was fought in heaven when an angel rebelled against the sovereign Lord, and Lucifer has forever gone down in history as the enemy of peace. "It was a conflict," says Bossuet, "of thoughts and of sentiments. The angel of pride said, 'Let us do our own will like God'; and Michael asked on the contrary, 'Who is like God? Whence is his name?'" And St. Augustine tells us that "the first founder of the earthly state was a fratricide, and it is not strange that its history should correspond with that archetype."

Powerful leaders of nations may have conquered other nations and brought temporary prosperity, political, economic and social prestige to their people; but they did not necessarily bring happiness and peace. King Solomon of old had made his nation rich and prosperous. He enjoyed riches, pleasure and power such as no other sovereign enjoyed before him or since. Yet, in all Solomon's glory he was heard to cry out: "O vanity of vanities, and all is vanity!" Alexander the Great had conquered the whole world and wept because he had no more worlds to conquer. But he died at Babylon, an unhappy and disillusioned man. And thus page after page of history records the struggles of great men and warriors, a record of slaughter, destructive flame and blood floating in fearful vision before our eyes until we hear a sound of prayer, as from a vast concordant multitude, crying to the heavens

May thy kingdom's peace  
Come unto us; for we, unless it come,  
With all our striving, thither tend in vain.

*The Peace of Christ*

Such a Kingdom of Peace was promised to the world by God Himself. There was no more comforting promise in the entire Old Testament than that God would send peace to His people. Psalm after Psalm sings the awaited message how "the Lord will bless His people with peace"; Psalm after Psalm cries for peace, "Let the mountains receive peace for the people." Then followed the great prophecy of Isaias which bestows on the Messias the most victorious and most endearing of titles—the Prince of Peace. And with the beginning of the New Testament the word "peace" takes on a new meaning, namely, both peace and happiness.

The very night the Savior was born the angels sang over His crib, "Peace on earth to men of good will." A little later it is the Lord's universal and most tender greeting, "Peace to you"; "Have peace among you"; "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." And how important this message was to His disciples is evident by the frequency with which the apostles repeat it. "He is our peace," says St. Paul. Again, "Let us have peace with God"; "The Lord of Peace Himself gives you everlasting peace in every place"; "Follow peace with all men," and so on. For the peacemaker, St. James adds, "The fruit of justice is sown in peace to them that make peace." St. John greets his people with, "Grace be with you, mercy and peace." And St. Peter admonishes all, saying, "He that will have life and see good days—let him seek after peace and pursue it." Again, centuries later, Jesus spoke to St. Margaret Mary, saying, "I will give peace in their families." Indeed, it must have been a sweet message to those who heard Christ addressing them on the Mount,

saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

*But Peace is Elusive Even Now*

And yet, even the people of Israel and their leaders misconstrued the meaning of the words of the Lord. Carnal as they were by nature, and living in bondage and want, they dreamed only of the day when that Prince of Peace would again bring them back their national glory and make them prosperous and happy in the material sense. And because He refused to satisfy their carnal desires and spoke to them of another Kingdom, a Spiritual Kingdom, they rejected Him and refused to walk with Him any longer. And ultimately they rejected Him entirely and crucified Him as an enemy of the people.

And it has been much the same story ever since. People want their own kind of peace, not God's kind. They want it presented to them without having to work for it. Thus, John a Kempis, the brother of Thomas, says, "the wish of these men is that they may be humble but without being looked down upon; patient, but without suffering; obedient, but without restraint; poor, but without wanting anything; penitent, but without sorrow."

We have heard a great deal about leagues of nations for peace in recent years. It is not a new idea. The genesis of the idea of a meeting of representatives of nations to obtain by peaceful arbitrament a settlement of differences dates back to the year 1623. At that time a French monk, named Emeric Cruce, wrote a work entitled *The New Cyneas*, a discourse showing the opportunities and the means for establishing a general peace and liberty of conscience for all the world, and which he addressed to



the various rulers of nations. Others then wrote in a similar vein, but nothing was accomplished.

In 1826, a congress composed of representatives of Spanish-American countries was planned by Bolivar for military as well as political purposes. The same countries tried many times again in the next fifty years but without any success. In 1881, the president of the United States invited all nations of North and South America to convene for the purpose of peace, but little was accomplished. Then the Emperor of Russia in 1900 appealed to all the world, and The Hague Conference came into being. Upon the invitation of President McKinley in 1902, all the nations of North and South America, with most of the other nations in the world joined in a body. And this same Court at The Hague is in existence today. In our own life time we have had our League of Nations at Geneva, and at present our United Nations with headquarters in New York.

And yet, there is still no peace. Why? First of all, it is well to examine some of the leading topics submitted to these leagues of nations for discussion as a basis for the establishment of international peace. Here are some of them: (1) measures tending to preserve the peace and promote prosperity; (2) measures looking for the formations of customs unions; (3) sanitation, ships and quarantine; (4) adoption of a uniform system of weights and measures; (5) laws to protect patent rights, copyrights, trade marks; (6) the adoption of a definite plan of arbitration of all questions, disputes, and differences. In all these, let it be noted, there is constant stress placed upon material things, material prosperity, material peace, but little or nothing said about peace of soul, spiritual happiness. And if we wish to become members of Christ's

Kingdom and enjoy His peace we must begin by becoming peacemakers ourselves and not wait for some foreign potentate to bring it to us. And we must not begin with the question, "How many divisions can you furnish?" but we must approach the heavenly Father in childlike simplicity. "Unless you become as little children," says the Lord, for there is no one so essentially at peace as a little child. In this childlike simplicity the Savior was born: "A child is born to us, and His name shall be called the Prince of Peace."

### *Peace of Christ*

This brings us to the vital question of what this peace is which was promised in the seventh Beatitude. Briefly, St. Augustine defines peace as the tranquillity of order. That is the most perfect definition of peace ever given. It is that tranquillity of order which comes to us when we subordinate all things to the sovereign good, which is God. Therefore, when I subject my senses to reason, reason to faith, and the whole man to God as the final goal of perfection—that is the basis of all peace. Other recognized authorities say "Peace of beatitude is when the mind, by charity, rests in the true good," which is God. "It is God alone who can give quiet to the desires of man, and make him happy," says St. Thomas. "This is the true rest of the heart, when it is fixed by desire in the love of God; when it seeks nothing else, but is delighted with a certain happy security in Him."

And what begets this peace?

Gentleness, virtue, wisdom, and endurance,  
These are the seals of that most firm assurance,  
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;

These are the spells by which to reassume  
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.  
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To love to bear, to hope this is to be,  
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone life, joy, empire, and victory.

### *Positive Plans for Permanent Peace*

In 1946 President Truman, while addressing a group of veterans and university graduates who were about to enter careers in the world, made the following statement: "I fear we are too much concerned with material things to remember that our real strength lies in spiritual values. I doubt whether there is in this troubled world today, when nations are divided by jealousy and suspicion, a single problem that could not be solved if approached in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount." And one of the finest expositions of the seventh Beatitude comes from the pen of Clare Booth Luce. She entitled it a "Formula for Peace for World and You." "Everywhere I go," she says, "people ask me: 'When is the United Nations going to bring us peace?' The answer is that peace cannot be produced by organized groups alone, political or economic, however good the organization. There are no man-made blue-prints for peace, which alone can produce peace.

"I do not mean we all cannot discover the laws of peace. We can. But we can't invent them. It's like this: take Euclid, whose geometry we study in school. Euclid did not create, he discovered the mathematical laws for geometry. The laws themselves had always been in the universe. He worked them out, but he did not create them

anymore than the miner creates the gold he digs out of the mountain.

"There is a God-given law of peace, too. But it can be found only in the hearts of men of good will. Only good will, brotherly love, can cast out the fear in men's hearts of other men. And fear is the root of all war. Peace is the trustful triangle formed by love between each man, his neighbor, and God.

"Another thing: we must never forget that even though the world can't have peace, every individual can. You and I can find peace for ourselves through prayer and union with the Divine Plan. And if each of us would try to find peace for ourselves, we would be helping to find it for the whole world.

"Peace! No man-made plot or plan, no diplomatic maneuvers can advance it. No international organizations or treaties can guarantee it. No balance of power, schemes, no armies can enforce it unless—*unless* God is the base of the triangle formed by Him, with each of us on one side and our neighbor on the other." And how such a world-transformation might be accomplished was forcefully set forth in the annual statement of our American Bishops, Nov. 18, 1951, under the title: "God's Law, the Measure of Man's Conduct."

### *Spiritual and Temporal Fruits of Peace*

In the words of St. Bernardine of Sienna, "See what are the temporal fruits of peace: all things are filled with joy; agriculture flourishes when martial fury interrupts not the process of nature; men travel securely, no robber is feared by the way; domestic virtues reign; cities are adorned by the arts; the flocks and herds are led to pas-

ture to the sound of flutes and pipes; the woods are made tame; houses are built; families are multiplied; merchants go and return in safety; the tranquillity of monks is preserved; the offices of the Church are celebrated without interruption; literary studies flourish; exercises of piety are performed; the word of God is honored and fructified amidst the multitude of people; everyone has his rights and no one complains of injustice."

This is the Christian idea of peace and tranquillity, when rulers of nations are reminded, as Duke Albert of Austria was, that "the first duty and the real glory of a ruler is to secure peace to the people committed to him." Such were the days when rulers of nations became saints of God, like Charlemagne or King St. Louis of France, King St. Edward of England, St. Elizabeth, queen of Portugal, St. Elizabeth of the royal household of Hungary, and many others who could be mentioned, rulers all in palaces of kings and queens.

Where holy lives must win a new world's crown,  
Which their profane hours here have stricken down.

### *Triangular Peace Essential*

There is an old and beautiful expression about going to Confession. It is "to make your peace with God." And peace-making is the golden rule followed for the love of God, the only road to peace, and this road is three-pronged. As Mrs. Luce states, there are three that enter into the picture of peace—myself, God, and my neighbor. This triangle of peace somehow cannot be divided. If we are not at peace with our neighbor, we are not at peace with ourselves nor at peace with God. And if we are not

at peace with God, we cannot be at peace with ourselves nor at peace with our neighbor. For, says the Lord, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy neighbor as thyself." That means to re-establish love in our hearts, forgive our enemy if need be, and seek ever reconciliation with the offender out of love for God.

Therefore, first of all, I must begin myself to set things right with God. As Thomas a Kempis says, "All men desire peace, but few want to take the means." In other words, we must not seek peace on our terms, but on God's terms. Let us also remember this: peace is not a negative thing, not a passive thing. It is something positive, something we can make, something we can spread over the earth. Therefore, peacemakers must unite words with action. When our Lord sent forth His disciples he told them, "Into whatsoever house you enter, say first, Peace be to this house." For, in the words of Ozanam, "It is within, not without, that we must seek for sources of men's happiness and its principal enemies, and we shall have done nothing so long as we have not carried light and reform into those internal disorders which time does not right, which are more incurable than diseases."

We can all do our part in being peacemakers in our own little circle, in our own little way. St. Augustine tells of his own mother Monica: "Whenever she could she acted the part of peacemaker between divided and discordant souls and never repeated to the one the bitter things which she had heard from the other. This would seem to me but a small virtue did I not know to my sorrow a host of people who not only repeat the words of angry men to angry men, but add to them what was never said at all." And St. Teresa wrote: "I always had this thought present with me, that I was never to wish nor to



say anything of any creature that I would not have them say of me. Hence it was generally understood that where I chanced to be, all absent persons were safe." St. Thomas More, when he heard detraction or criticism of any absent one, would promptly interrupt and say, "Let every one declare his opinion, but I affirm this house to be well built."

### *Peace Through Prayer*

Peace does not always come easily. Very often it must be bought at a price. But even at that, never sacrifice principle for peace. Even if you must, in the words of Thomas a Kempis, "think that God and you are alone in the world, you will have great rest in your heart." And one thing we can all do, and that is to pray for peace. For, says the poet Tennyson,

More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of.

Petrus Sutorus tells us how whole religious communities are devoted to peace through prayer. "The Carthusian monks," he tells us, "use daily in their cells certain peculiar prayers for all kinds of sorrow and necessities that belong to the human race; sedulously they reflect on all the delusions and miseries of life, on the pomps of prelates, the ambition of clerks, the curiosity of students, the elation of the learned, the exactions of princes, the crafts of the litigious, the adulations of courtiers, the pride of nobles, the violence of soldiers, the corruptions of judges, the dishonesty of merchants, the tribulations of the married, the avarice of the rich, the wants of the poor, the pains of the sick, the groans of prisoners, the afflictions of widows and orphans, the oppressions of travellers, the

tribulations of the just, and on unnumerable other evils for which they incessantly pray."

In closing, let me give you a prayer all can say. It is a prayer broadcast over more than a thousand radio stations every week. It is the prayer of St. Francis for peace.

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that  
I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying  
That we are born to eternal life.

# The Eighth Beatitude

*"Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

**W**ITH the eighth Beatitude we have come to the final chapter on the road to spiritual perfection. You will note that both the first and the eighth Beatitude have the same reward promised, namely, the Kingdom of Heaven. St. Augustine treats the seventh and the eighth Beatitudes as one, saying, "this eighth Beatitude is probative and consummative of the former, for the first seven perfect men, but the eighth glorifies and demonstrates them perfect, when for the sake of preserving and propagating the others, they willingly suffer death and all kinds of confusion and pain." "Therefore," continues St. Bonaventure, "the endurance of death for Christ is the same degree with peace; and it is on this account, we say, that there are eight beatitudes as to *essence*, but only seven as to distinctions of *degree*. For above peace there is no virtue, since peace, as St. Augustine says, is the end and consummation of all virtues."

*Who Suffer Persecution*

From the outset it might be asked: "Who is included with the persecuted and the sufferers for whom a special reward is promised?" To this group belong all those who labor, very often under severe and unjust masters; those who in their simplicity and humility suffer without murmuring, inured to the sweat, hardship, privations, and sacrifices; those, as it were, who are still under the rod; those who are obedient in all common relations, overlooking the proud and the overbearing; those who are governed by ruthless superiors and brute force; in a word, all those who are persecuted under one form or the other as indicated under all the other Beatitudes.

St. Bernardine of Sienna calls all these martyrs, and gives us a beautiful exposition of this Beatitude, saying, "On this Beatitude Christ gives us a triple doctrine—general, special, and particular—for three things make a man a martyr: the pain, the cause, and perseverance in the reward, which is the kingdom of heaven. There is a triple justice, on account of which the just man suffers persecution: the justice of faith, that of morality, and that of charity. For the first suffered the martyrs of the early church; for the second, Christians daily suffer in the discharge of the active duties of life; the third, of charity, is that patience which hath a perfect work, when, through love of God and man, no virtue is allowed to relax, but we persevere in every act and word and thought of justice in spite of all opposition and trials."

Furthermore, suffering and persecution may also extend beyond mere bodily afflictions. It is also persecution when the just suffer from dissimilar manners and contradictions. One may also suffer when he sees God dishonored and

His Church persecuted, vice practiced and justice outraged. Then again, note that in the other Beatitudes Christ speaks in the third person—"they shall obtain mercy," "they shall see God,"—but in the eighth Beatitude He turns to His disciples and says, "blessed are *they*." Perhaps He did this, says St. Bernardine, "to show the great difficulty which required more persuasion, or as speaking to the perfect, who were to go forth as lambs amidst wolves; these he exhorts to endure a triple suffering—malediction, corporal persecution, and detraction." Finally, let it be noted, Christ gives us a particular doctrine in the eight Beatitude when He adds the words "for my sake."

### *Suffering Persecution Pleasing to God*

Everything man suffers can be properly understood only in the light of Christ Crucified. There is nothing more glorious, more touching, more adorable than Jesus suffering. Nothing speaks more forcibly than this to our souls. Nothing encourages or comforts us more. Nothing heightens our faith, hope, and charity more than Jesus on the cross. For if Christ is lovely as the divine Infant, wonderful as the Son of God, consoling in His infinite love and mercy towards the sick and suffering, awful and sublime as our Judge, He is far, far more lovely, wonderful, consoling in His Passion and Death. For "greater love no man has than a man lay down his life for his friends." So St. Paul says, "Christ also loved us and delivered himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor." And ever since then His cross has become the magnet drawing all hearts to Him, as He had prom-

ised, saying, "I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw all things to myself."

"The problem of pain," says Benson, "is the same thing as the problem of love." Therefore, the Christ of love is also the Christ of pain. In fact His whole life was one of pain and suffering. That is why He is known as the Man of Sorrows. And because He loved and suffered He was persecuted. Those sacred hands of His which blessed the little ones, healed the sick, raised the dead back to life, and gave us the Holy Eucharist, became pierced hands, pierced through persecution. That noble forehead, worthy of the royal crown of heaven and earth, became a pierced brow, pierced through persecution. Those sacred feet which sought sinners along the dusty roads of Palestine became pierced feet, pierced through persecution. And that heart of His which bled to death for love of us, became a broken heart, broken through persecution.

### *Suffering the Measure of Love*

Agony means struggle. Pain is a struggle as love is a struggle. Therefore, suffering was the measure of God's love for man, and suffering was to be the measure of man's love for God. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." That was His condition of union with Him. He made no exception to the rule. Even His own Mother, the sinless one, who deserved no pain, was made to suffer. So she is called the Mother of Sorrows. We also call her the Blessed Mother, for "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake." St. Joseph, too, qualified for this Beatitude, for he suffered persecution when forced to flee into exile in Egypt, and suffered all the cares and woes of family life.



Then we have St. John the Baptist who prepared the way for the coming of the Savior. He suffered for justice' sake, and was ignominiously beheaded. But in particular must Jesus have had in mind the Holy Innocents, the first fruits of the "Blessed" litany, when He gave the world the eighth Beatitude.

*Our Lord's Kingdom Established in Pain*

From the very beginning, therefore, our Lord made it clear that His Kingdom on earth would be established on the principle of suffering and pain. No wonder the people of Israel were shocked, even horrified, that with the Beatitudes Jesus, once and for all, crushed within their hearts all aspirations for a glorified Israel. Instead of a kingdom filled with riches, pleasures, and powers, He now offers them nothing but pain and sorrow. For this they rejected Him and crucified Him as a malefactor. Even the apostles who were looking forward to an era of ease, comfort and honor, were startled to hear Him say, "If the world hate you, know that it has hated me before you. Remember my words that I have said to you: the servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

But the apostles and faithful disciples were quick to learn. For after the Holy Spirit came upon them, the necessity of suffering persecution became clear. "In this we have known the charity of God," says St. John, "because he has laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Passage after passage could be cited from the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles to show that they based all their teachings upon Christ and Him crucified, and that all who would come

to Him must suffer with Him and for love of Him. And not only did they preach suffering, but they also endured it. How many times they were persecuted, laughed at, scorned, flogged and imprisoned! And at the end all were made to suffer unto death, gladly laying down their lives because they knew that for them this was the surest way to eternal happiness.

¶ You may be interested to know what happened to each of the apostles. St. Matthew is supposed to have suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia. St. Mark was dragged through the streets of Alexandria till he expired. St. Luke was hanged on an olive tree in Greece. St. John was put into a cauldron of boiling oil, but miraculously escaped death, and banished to the Island of Patmos where he died. St. James the Less was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, then clubbed to death. St. Philip was hanged against a pillar at Hierapolis in Phrygia. St. Bartholomew was flayed alive by order of a barbarous king. St. Andrew was bound to a cross, whence he preached to the people until he died. St. Thomas was pierced with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies. St. Simon Zelotes was crucified in Persia. St. Matthias was stoned, then beheaded. St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, was crucified upside down in Rome.

Now let us hear St. Paul who has recorded, almost sarcastically, some of his personal sufferings for the faith. "From the Jews," he says, "five times I received forty lashes less one. Thrice I was scourged, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was adrift on the sea; in journeyings often, in perils from floods, in perils from robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false

brethren; in labor and hardships, in many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." St. Paul was a strategist, using every ruse conceivable to avoid persecution; but when it became unescapable, he faced every suffering with courage and joy for the love of Christ Crucified.

### *Persecution of the Faithful*

And these same apostles strongly and successfully impressed upon their converts the necessity and the glory of suffering, even martyrdom, for the love of Christ. Thus spoke St. Peter to them: "If you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when his glory shall be revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy." "Nobody had such great faith in Socrates as to die for his doctrines," exclaims St. Justine Martyr. And as for pagan gods and goddesses, they were a polyglot crew, adopted from many lands, and not worth dying for. In fact, the name "martyr," is a Christian word, meaning the witnessing to or confessing of Christ and His Gospel.

For the first three hundred years fierce persecution of the Christians went on unabated. The pagan world was determined to extinguish the Light of the World. The life of Christians was crammed with perpetual fear, struggle, and bloodshed. The shadow of the sword hung over them when they sallied forth from the catacombs. At night the gardens of pagan Rome were lighted with torches cruelly fashioned from the tarred, crucified bodies of living Christians. And each setting sun left its usual list of martyrs and its long row of graves.

The punishment and suffering these Christian martyrs endured are beyond description. Some were dressed in

the skins of beasts and then packs of hounds were sent after them; some were tied up in sacks with snakes and dogs and then drowned; some were covered with tar bandages, fixed to stakes, and then set on fire. Other torments of peculiar ingenuity were resorted to. Many were transported into penal servitude, to banishment and death. They were branded on the forehead, chains were riveted on their legs, and then they were put to work in the silver and lead mines, or as galley slaves on ships. Even boys and girls were imprisoned in the mines to carry the minerals in baskets. They were ill-fed, half-naked, freezing in the cold underground caverns.

Many poor convicts were hamstrung, blinded in the right eye which was pierced with a dagger and then the wound cauterized with a red hot iron. Added to these were the moral afflictions. Christians were degraded in social rank, their goods were confiscated and auctioned off, homes were destroyed, families beggared, dispersed, and often women were sent into houses of prostitution. There was death on the cross, death at the stake as food for beasts, and death by beheading. "We hang on crosses," exclaimed Tertullian, "we are licked by the flames, the sword lays open our throat, the wild beasts spring upon us."

But these Christians were not afraid and did not waver in their faith. Said Tertullian to a Roman magistrate, "You need not fear us, but neither do we fear you." Courageously, they were ready to suffer and die for Christ. It became a motto with them: "To do great things is Roman, to suffer great things is Christian." Men and women, young and old, had such a love for the Cross, that they invited martyrdom with joy. Christ had died for them, so they must really die for Him. And yet, they

were human beings just like the rest of us. They had all the evils of paganism in their blood, many with a bad family history before their conversion. Life was just as sweet to them as it is to us. But then they took their religion seriously and felt that Jesus meant just what He said when He defined true blessedness through suffering and persecution.

### *Joy Through Suffering*

"The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians." Within thirty years, in spite of the persecutions, there were Christians all over the Roman Empire and beyond. "We are but of yesterday," said Tertullian, "and yet we fill every place, your cities, your houses, your fortresses, your municipal offices, councils, camps, tribes, lecurias, palaces, senate, forum—we only leave you your temples." And they faced all obstacles with joy and happiness. As St. Cyprian, encouraging his flock, states, "The Lord desired that we should rejoice and leap for joy in persecutions, because, when persecutions occur, then are given the crowns of faith, then the soldiers of God are proved, then the heavens are opened to martyrs."

And the striking thing about these early Christians was their cosmopolitan character. Even from among the nobility, Roman ladies became converts and martyrs. These were known as "goddesses of earth," living in incredible luxury, with thousands of slaves to wait upon them. Many of these ladies became excellent Christians, like Fabiola, who established a hospital; like Flavia Domitilla, the granddaughter of Emperor Vespasian, who was banished, after her husband Flavius was beheaded for the faith.

And strangest of all, there were more soldier martyrs

for the faith than any other group or profession. Sometimes whole regiments were converted, which meant certain martyrdom. There were men like St. Sebastian, who became a soldier in order to help other soldiers in the faith. He was Captain of Emperor Diocletian's favorite guard, but that did not save him. He was tied to a tree and riddled with arrows, enduring a slow martyrdom, and ending by being beaten to death. And so the litany went on. Old men, like St. Polycarp; girls like Agnes, Eulalia, Secunda, all aged twelve; boys like Tarcisius, Ponticus, Pancratius. Savina, also a mere girl, was taken with a fit of laughter as she was being led to trial and death. Even the slaves furnished many martyrs; St. Ariadne, St. Blaudina, St. Felicitas, St. Sabina were all slaves.

### *Suffering and Persecution Unabated*

"To do great things is Roman, to suffer great things is Christian!" How consoling must this thought be for the millions that are suffering a similar fate at this very hour behind the Iron Curtain and all over the world! It is estimated that more martyrs have died for their faith since Communism came into power than all the other Christian martyrs together for two thousand years. Their methods of torture remain much the same as of old; only new and more scientific methods have been added: drugs, strong and brilliant klieg-lights, and other mental tortures to befuddle the brain and reason before inflicting the final bodily torture. It is estimated that more than 11,000 priests alone were martyred during the revolution in Spain. They, with Cardinal Mindszenty and Archbishop Stepinac, with thousands of other successors of the Apostles can repeat with St. Justin Martyr, "You can kill, but



not hurt us." Or, like the Christian general who, brought as a prisoner before Mohamet II and given his choice between death and renouncing his faith, bared his breast all covered with wounds of war and said, "What! must I receive a thousand wounds for an earthly emperor and fear to die for the Emperor of Heaven?" And St. Thomas More had the same thought as thousands of other Christians when he wrote his *Dialogue* in prison while awaiting martyrdom. "If reason alone be sufficient," he says, "to move a man to take pain for the gaining of some worldly rest or pleasure, and for the avoiding of another pain, though peradventure more, yet durable for a short season, why should not reason, furthered with faith and grace, be much more able to engender in us first such an affection, and after by long and deep meditation thereof, so to continue that affection that it shall turn into an habitual, fast, and deep-rooted purpose of patiently suffering the painful death of this body here on earth, for the gaining of everlasting life in Heaven and avoiding everlasting painful death in Hell."

### *Spiritual Martyrdom*

"Holiness and suffering are the same thing," says Abbé Huvelin. "You will never do any good to others save in and by suffering. Our Lord gained the world, not by His discourses, the Sermon on the Mount, but by His blood, His suffering on the cross." And St. Augustine adds, "It is not the pain but the cause that makes the martyr." These words give us all much food for thought. It is true that there have been multitudes of martyrs in every age, nation, and clime all over the world, that no one can compute their number. However, while we cannot all be

martyrs in fact, we can all become martyrs in spirit. Every saint is a potential martyr, and the eighth Beatitude is not beyond the reach of any of us. "To carry our own mortality," says St. Augustine, "is to carry the Cross." For example, the plain, prosy keeping of the Commandments in our daily lives is not the lightest of crosses. Then there is the buffeting of Satan, the ridicule of the world that tries to keep us from a militant profession of our faith. There is sickness, the death of loved ones, and so forth. All these things are a part of our daily lives, and not always easy. We must bear them whether we like it or not. But if we bear them with Christian fortitude, we may learn to like it by bearing them for the love of Christ.

According to our Lord Himself, we find life by losing it, through suffering for God and neighbor. Must not the grapes be crushed before we can convert them into sparkling wine which is changed into the Precious Blood of Christ in a golden chalice? Is not wheat ground before we have the host which becomes the Real Presence in the golden ciborium? Must not the alabaster vase, like Magdalene's, be broken before the home is filled with fragrance? Does not the violet produce its sweetest fragrance after it is crushed? In like manner, a great and heavenly blessing comes from bruises and blows of persecution suffered for the sake of God and neighbor. This, in fact, is the keynote of all the Beatitudes. For pain is love, and love is pain, and all the Beatitudes are but so many love-tokens of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

In the words of St. Bonaventure, "The splendor of the Beatitudes shines forth in the blessed passion of our Lord, which is properly their foundation and origin. For who is poor in spirit unless Christ naked upon the cross? Who is meek unless he who was led as a sheep to the

slaughter, and who, as a lamb, opened not his mouth? Who mourns, unless he who, with a great cry and tears, offered up supplications for his enemies, who lamented for our sins and had compassion on our miseries? Who hungered and thirsted after justice unless Christ upon the cross, satisfying for our sins and thirsting after the salvation of souls? Who is merciful unless that Samaritan who bore our infirmities upon his own body? Where is cleanliness of heart seen unless in him who cleansed our hearts with his precious blood? Who is pacific, unless he who is our peace, and hath reconciled us to God in his blood? Who suffers persecution for the sake of justice, unless he who was crucified by the Jews, against whom men blasphemed and bore lying testimony?" Therefore, let us follow the Royal Way of the Cross.

### *The Royal Road*

There are wrongs that cannot be righted,  
There are crosses that must be borne,  
There are duties that cannot be slighted,  
There are thorn crowns that must be worn.

There are griefs that cannot find comfort,  
And wounds that cannot be healed.  
There are sorrows so deep in the human heart,  
They cannot be half revealed.

But, oh! Let us carry our crosses;  
We carry them not alone—  
Let us tread on earth's rough places  
Even as Christ has done.

Let us bury our bitter sorrows,  
Deep in His Sacred Heart,  
And think what a blessed thing it is  
To have in His sorrows a part.

Let us think of the wrongs He has suffered,  
Let us think of the Cross He bore,  
Let us think of His weary journey,  
Let us think of the Crown He wore.

Surely the pain and the sorrow  
Christ chose for Himself must be best;  
Let us follow Him, then, in the way of the Cross  
For it leads unto Heaven's sweet rest.

## Epilogue

*“Do you know that those who run in a race, all indeed run, but one receives the prize? They indeed to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable. I, therefore, so run as not without a purpose. So run as to obtain it” (I. Corinthians ix. 24-26) .*

Now that we have completed our study of the Eight Beatitudes, a few personal observations seem in place. We wrote this volume, not with an intentional appeal to a certain class or group, but for the general public, for all classes, for the benefit of people in all faiths or of no faith at all, for rich and poor, the high and the lowly, and especially for the benefit and guidance of those disturbed over their own personal uneasiness and bewilderment, as well as for those who are much disturbed over the confusion of the entire world as a whole.

As for myself, the present world situation reminds me of Kaulbach's picture of the destruction of Jerusalem. This canvas portrays the carnage and conflagration within the city, while off in the distance we see a little company of Christians quietly and peacefully moving away from the city. The children play along the road-side, and herds are nipping the grass as they leisurely move on. Above are the shadow forms of angels watching unseen over these pilgrims.

This picture is a true representation of Jerusalem at that time and is a true picture of the world today. For in times of greatest peril and distress those who are Christ's faithful followers are cared for by Him, as He promised, and they are as secure as if they sat in sweet repose. They know and realize that in a crisis such as we live in now, there is only one thing to do, namely, to be simply faithful and trustful in the midst of dangers and trials and to do our duty as we see it. We must quietly and patiently endure whatever suffering or loss may come our way, confidently and resignedly continue to do what our Master bids, and leave in God's hands the whole matter of our protection and security.

Scientists tell us that in the center of a swirling cyclone, which carries devastation and ruin in its awful sweep, there is a spot so quiet that a leaf scarcely stirs, where a little child might sleep undisturbed. In like manner, in the heart of this world's most terrific convulsion there is a place of perfect security, and that is our place of duty and trust.

### *The All Important Thing*

The all important thing for you and for me is to know our place in life and to find the means placed at our dis-



posal to persevere and accomplish that for which we were born. This reminds me of the story of the magnificent Temple of the Sun, built many centuries ago at Baalbek, thirty-five miles north, north-west of Damascus in Syria. Some of its pillars are still standing. Nearby is the quarry from which came the stone for the wonderful temple. In this quarry, almost detached from its rock, dressed and ready for its place in the temple, is an immense column about seventy feet in length. A vacant place in the temple, now in ruins, is waiting for it. For 4,000 years this column has lain in that quarry, but it has never occupied the place for which it was destined.

There are many people in the world much like that useless monolith; made for a noble destiny, with grand possibilities, they have missed it all for lack of lofty purpose and worthy ambition. For, says Cardinal Newman, "God has committed to me a work which no one else can do. He has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have a mission. I have a part in a great work; I am a link in the chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do His work." It is, then, a glorious thought that each of our little lives is a part of the divine plan, that God made us for something definite and particular.

### *Aids to Accomplish Our Destiny*

To aid us in the accomplishment of this great task, the Beatitudes play a very great and important part. In the words of Mrs. Clare Booth Luce, they form the blue-print or basis of that divine plan which is to govern us in our common, every-day tasks. And when correctly understood

and followed, they give us the assurance of an ultimate life of perfection, happiness here, and eternal happiness in heaven. And this is to be accomplished, not through extraordinary deeds of heroic virtue, but by observing the little things in our daily lives, pitying the poor, humility, meekness, mercy, hunger and thirst for justice, purity of intention—all indicated in the Beatitudes.

### *Essence of Holiness*

Heroic sanctity, in the minds of many, is thought to consist in such extraordinary qualities as visions, prophecies, powers to work miracles, and so on. This is entirely wrong. These have nothing directly to do with holiness of life. In fact, in the minds of many great theologians, these might even become hindrances to further advancement in sanctity. Few saints enjoyed these special prerogatives. Nearly all of them were just ordinary people, like you and I. They had their inordinate passions to contend with; they had their personal faults as we; but through daily perseverance they overcame their imperfections and became perfect in little things, and the bigger things took care of themselves. Many, too, accomplished this under adverse circumstance in homes, shops, and factories. But they approached every problem with purity of intention, with grace and prayer, and they accomplished what they set out to do—became happy here on earth, and are now saints of God, set before us for our own edification and imitation.

As I read mystical books like Merton's *Ascent to Truth*, *Seven Storey Mountain*, and *Waters of Silo*, I often wonder why such works should become best sellers. Upon reflection, however, it would seem to be a sign of the times,

when people are nervous, uneasy, and longing for something to satisfy the soul of man. As for myself, now that I have turned back for a second time to *Ascent to Truth*, I find that after my first reading I made the following annotation on the inside of the front cover: "Here is an author who became a convert to the faith only a few years ago. Yet, here we find the author treating like a master the subject of mysticism and the life of contemplation. After reading *Ascent to Truth*, I ask myself this: You have been a priest for thirty-five years, read, studied, wrote, and preached a lot during those years; yet, what little progress in the spiritual life! And if not, why not?" I wish I knew the answer.

### *Wholesome Advice*

As for my advice to others, I would say this: If you are disturbed over your own personal condition, worried over the bewildered world around you, and wish to look for guidance, begin with more practical reading and study, something that is more practical for your immediate needs. Besides a thorough study of the Beatitudes, I would suggest that you concentrate more on the fundamental truths of our religion. For general reading, for example, we have two nationally known Catholic weeklies, *Our Sunday Visitor* and *The Denver Register*. Mr. Fulton Oursler, a convert, has given us two excellent books: *The Greatest Book Ever Written* and *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. There is also the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, consisting of personal letters addressed to his friend Philothea (meaning a lover of God) by St. Francis de Sales. Then, for the more advanced, we have two recent books: *An Introduction to Holiness* by Henri Petitot, O.P., and *The Secret of Holiness* by Father James, O.F.M.Cap.

These books follow the principles of the Church by adhering to the fundamentals of her teaching guided always by the mind of St. Peter, under the slogan, "Where Peter is, there is the Church." And emulating his predecessors, our present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in most of his encyclicals to his universal flock, always stresses once more the fundamentals in dogma and morals as the proper guidance for people of today. Our own bishops in America, in their annual united pastoral letter to their flocks, also select definite and particular topics in order to counteract the prevalent evils of our times, the causes that create them, and methods to follow to eradicate or counteract them.

Another piece of wholesome advice is this: Do not get excited over the many reports around the world about visions, apparitions, and unauthenticated miracles. It is another manifestation of the times when we hear about thousands of people flocking to places where these manifestations are being reported. It shows once more how people are looking for something visible, tangible, something that will appeal to the senses in order to satisfy their yearnings of the soul for peace and happiness. Let us be guided by the authorities of the Church and await their decision in all these matters. Let us much rather seek for peace of mind and heart through the regular channels of the Church, established by Jesus Christ, through regular attendance at Holy Mass and Communion in our churches, more frequent reception of the Sacraments and prayer, the regular and recognized channels through which we receive peace of mind and happiness even amidst disturbed surroundings.

*Positive Religion Needed*

Let us make our life not a negative thing, but a positive thing. We must live our religion in a positive, everyday fashion. That is why I consider it a waste of time for ordinary people to bother about controversial matters in religion at this time. Discussions over abstract matters, such as whether Teresa Neumann is a visionary or not, whether her manifestations and bleedings are supernatural or mere deceptions, should be left to the authorities of the Church to determine. Theologians and medical science may discuss the pros and cons of such debatable questions, but in this busy life of ours, with little time for reflection and prayer, again I say, we have all we can do to settle our minds with positive truths, positive religion. We have a positive work assigned to us by God to do, which no one else will do; and this must be accomplished with positive deeds, guided by positive religion. This is living the life of the Beatitudes, a life that will, with God's promises, give us peace and happiness in a distracted world and eternal peace and happiness in eternity. What more can we desire?

This again brings us to our opening text of St. Paul: "Do you know that those who run in a race, all indeed run, but one receives the prize? They indeed to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable. I, therefore, so run as not without a purpose. So run as to obtain it." The crown at stake for us is peace and happiness, here and hereafter. We have God's promise that all can win the prize. The means at our disposal are pointed out to us in the Beatitudes. Grace and the Sacraments and prayer will do the rest. These unquestionably will guide us through the three ways—the purgative, the illuminative

and the unitive—that lead to a life of spiritual perfection. And to accomplish this we must think and act rightly.

And so Father James tells us: "Nothing can supply for thought, and for that deepest form of it which is reflection, in the life of man. Even when the light of faith is present, with the illumination which it casts upon the mystery of things, the obligation to think and reflect does not cease to be urgent; it is only by means of thought that the mind can penetrate to essentials. When we analyse the idea of perfection, in our attempt to understand it, we find that it breaks up into three distinct, though related concepts. There is, first, the idea of perfection as a final achievement, or complete realization, of all the potentialities of Christian man; and this concept is reserved for the perfection of heaven where man reaches the summit of achievement and happiness. There is, secondly, the idea of perfection as an initial integrity, or essential perfection, without which final achievement is impossible; and this is realized in man by sanctifying grace. But before this initial or essential perfection can flower in the complete realization of heaven there is, thirdly, the concept of a perfection in action, the perfection of virtue, by which the Christian merits the culmination of final glory."

*Spiritual Perfection Intended for All in this Life,  
But Reserved for the Few Until Eternity*

Spiritual perfection with peace and happiness through the Beatitudes, fortified by the Sacraments through grace and prayer, is intended for all as the ideal even in this life. But the fact of the matter is that few attain that goal while on this earth. The reason for this, I believe, can be found in the parable of the Lord about the royal wed-



ding banquet as recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel (xxii, 2-14). Here the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a king who made a wedding banquet for his son. Without distinction, the guests were invited, but many were the alibis and excuses why the invitation was rejected. Then the parable ends with the words, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

There are those who claim that our Lord here refers to the few that will become fit subjects for heaven and eternal glory, and the many that will be damned. But that opinion is untenable because it would nullify the entire work of Christ's Redemption for most of us. No one can fathom the mind of God. We do know that God will save no one against his own will. There are even certain sins mentioned in Scripture, with the threat that those who do those things cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Gal. v, 19-22). Then again, we do know that God has a way by which He reconciles His justice with His wisdom, mercy and compassion. The repentant Magdalene and the repentant thief, Dismas, at the time of the crucifixion are two such examples. It may be a sudden flash of grace as in the case of St. Paul on his way to Damascus, or the quiet whispering of a disturbed conscience as in the life of a St. Margaret of Cortona. Everyone will be offered the opportunity of repentance and salvation, to accept it or reject it.

Others speak of the excuses some of the guests gave for declining the invitation to the banquet, going "one to his farm, another to his traffic." If, they say, the religious state in cloister or convent is a higher state of life than that of the married state, then everybody should embrace the religious state in order to attain the ideal of spiritual perfection. If that became a reality, what would happen

to the human race? What would happen to commerce, traffic, production of the necessities of life, and society in general? Cardinal Newman gave the correct answer in two brief words, namely, "They won't." People never did, and they never will. In all ages God has always provided for the essential needs of the human race, its sustenance and perpetuity.

Furthermore, not all the occupants of cloisters, convents and monasteries will ever reach the third and highest stage of spiritual perfection here on earth. Most of them will advance from the first to the second stage of perfection, purging out their faults and acquiring a semblance of spiritual perfection through the practice of virtue, but few will attain the third and final stage, namely, perfect union with God here on earth.

On the other hand, while dwelling upon the Beatitudes we demonstrated repeatedly how the ideal of spiritual perfection can and has been attained by very many in the world—by kings and queens, members of every age and sex, single or married, and in every walk of life. They used the opportunities immediately at hand, practiced heroic virtues and became saints.

Therefore, no matter who or where we be, a beginning is necessary, sustained effort and perseverance is essential, and then the ultimate crown of happiness and glory is promised to all. And the Beatitudes show us how to begin, how to progress and persevere and ultimately reach the pinnacle of perfection. We must begin with poverty of spirit and see ourselves as God sees us; this begets meekness and humility before God and our neighbor; mourning for the miseries and sufferings of others follows next; and this begets a hunger and thirst for justice in order that God be honored as He deserves, while the

needy neighbor receives his just dues; this prompts us to be merciful towards others through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; we approach this task with purity of heart and intention in all our deeds; difficulties will be ironed out by playing the part of peacemakers; and finally, if we should suffer persecution for all this, the Lord has promised us the kingdom of heaven. And all these progressive steps are based on one thing, namely, love—love of God and one's neighbor. Therefore, the Eight Beatitudes are the stepping-stones that lead to peace and happiness, to spiritual perfection and the crown of eternal glory, through practical charity.

*Practical Charity*

An ardent spirit dwells with Christian love—  
The eagle's vigor in the pitying dove:  
'Tis not enough that we with sorrow sigh,  
That we the wants of pleading man supply,  
That we in sympathy with sufferers feel,  
Nor hear a grief without a wish to heal.  
Not these suffice; to sickness, pain, and woe,  
The Christian spirit loves with aid to go;  
Will not be sought, waits not for want to plead,  
But seeks the duty,—nay, prevents the need;  
Her utmost aid to every ill applies,  
And plants relief for coming miseries.